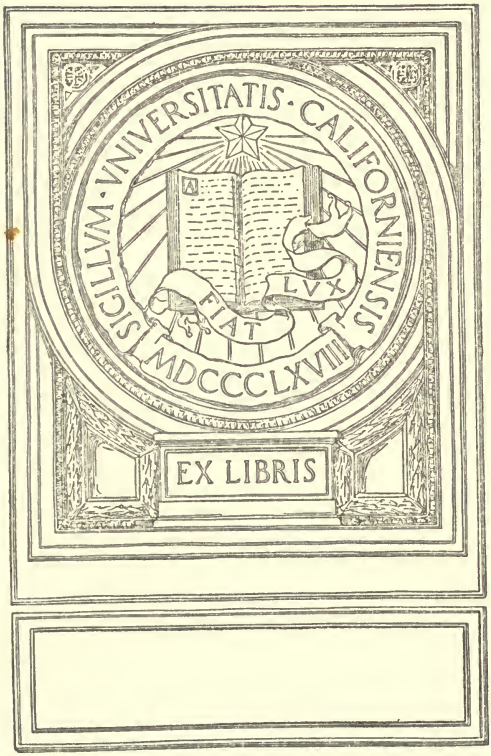
UC-NRLF
B 3 576 479


SIGILLVM · VNIVERSITATIS · CALIFORNIENSIS
FIAT LVX
MDCCCLXVIII
EX LIBRIS

CHRISTMAS NIGHT IN THE QUARTERS

AND OTHER POEMS

"Balance all!—now, step out rightly"

CHRISTMAS-NIGHT IN THE QUARTERS

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

IRWIN RUSSELL

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

AND AN HISTORICAL SKETCH BY
MAURICE GARLAND FULTON

ILLUSTRATED BY
E. W. KEMBLE

NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1917

953
R96
191

Copyright, 1888, 1917, by
THE CENTURY CO.

UNIV OF
CALIFORNIA

EDITOR'S NOTE

In my editorial work on this book, I am chiefly indebted to Miss Mary Elizabeth Russell of Los Angeles, California. She has not only placed at my disposal valuable manuscript material left by her brother, Irwin Russell, but she has furnished important biographical information, thus making it possible to put straight several matters which have been confused in other sketches of the poet.

I am also largely indebted to Mrs. Maggie Williams Musgrove of Port Gibson, Mississippi, who has placed all lovers of Irwin Russell under obligations by her faithfulness in gathering recollections of him from those who knew him personally in his native town. I have derived much help from articles by those who in the past have been interested enough in making the work of Russell better known to write about him. Espe-

M170823

cially should I mention several recent articles by Professor Alfred Allen Kern of Millsaps College, Jackson, Mississippi.

Of the new poems appearing in this volume; "The Mocking-Bird," "Summer Idyllers" and "Pot-liquor" are from Russell's unpublished manuscript; "Ships from the Sea" and "Dat Peter" first appeared in local newspapers of the poet's home town; "The Kingdom Gate" and "Uncle Caleb's Views" were found in the files of *The New Orleans Times;* and "A Mississippi Miracle" was printed originally in *Puck.*

M. G. F.

Davidson College,
Davidson, N. C.

INTRODUCTION

THERE are books that are written and published with high hopes and ambitious longings, but this volume is in the nature of a memorial to its author. It represents the results of the brief literary career of IRWIN RUSSELL, of Mississippi, who was born at Port Gibson, Mississippi, on the 3d of June, 1853, and who died at New Orleans on the 23d of December, 1879.

He possessed, in a remarkable degree, what has been described as the poetical temperament, and though he was little more than twenty-six years old at the time of his death, his sufferings and his sorrows made his life a long one. He had at his command everything that affection could suggest; he had loyal friends wherever he went; but, in spite of all this, the waywardness of genius led continually in the direction of suffering and sor-

row. In the rush and hurly-burly of the practical, every-day world, he found himself helpless; and so, after a brief struggle, he died.

Irwin Russell was among the first—if not the very first—of Southern writers to appreciate the literary possibilities of the negro character, and of the unique relations existing between the two races before the war, and was among the first to develop them. The opinion of an uncritical mind ought not to go for much, but it seems to me that some of Irwin Russell's negro-character studies rise to the level of what, in a large way, we term literature. His negro operetta, "Christmas-Night in the Quarters," is inimitable. It combines the features of a character study with a series of bold and striking plantation pictures that have never been surpassed. In this remarkable group,—if I may so term it,—the old life before the war is reproduced with a fidelity that is marvelous.

But the most wonderful thing about the dialect

poetry of Irwin Russell is his accurate conception of the negro character. The dialect is not always the best,—it is often carelessly written,—but the negro is there, the old-fashioned, unadulterated negro, who is still dear to the Southern heart. There is no straining after effect—indeed, the poems produce their result by indirection; but I do not know where could be found to-day a happier or a more perfect representation of negro character.

Joel Chandler Harris.

IRWIN RUSSELL

To the brief but generous introduction by Joel Chandler Harris, which accompanied the first edition of Irwin Russell's poems, and which is appropriately retained in this enlarged edition, it seems desirable to add further details regarding his life and work.

When it is remembered that the great majority of volumes of poetry fall stillborn from the press, that but a few are salable for a year, and that still fewer are remembered at the end of five years, the continued demand for Russell's poems after almost thirty years since they were first collected in 1888, nine years after his death, is evidence that his poems possess the vitality of genius. This lapse of time has brought also a definite appreciation of his significance in American Literature as one of the first to realize the literary value of Negro character and dialect. The distinction of being the leading pioneer in this field belongs to him not merely because he first caught the general attention of the reading public by his Negro dialect poems published in the eighteen seventies, but because he also stimulated others to work in this rich new field of literary mate-

rial. A striking instance of this is Thomas Nelson Page. When the latter published in 1888 a collection of Negro dialect poems which he and his friend, Armistead Gordon, had prepared under the title, "Befo' de War—Echoes in Negro Dialect"—he acknowledged his obligation by dedicating the book "To the Memory of Irwin Russell, who awoke the first echo." On another occasion, Mr. Page has given more emphatic ascription of influence, saying, "Personally I owe much to him. It was the light of his genius shining through his dialect poems,—then and still first,—that led my feet in the direction I have tried to follow. Had he but lived, we should have had proof of what might be done with true Negro dialect; the complement of 'Uncle Remus.'" Clearly, then, from Russell's work in his short life of twenty-six years, dates one of the striking phases of American literary history,—the faithful and sincere delineation of Negro character.

Irwin Russell was born in Port Gibson, Mississippi, June 3, 1853. His father, Dr. William McNab Russell, though of Virginia extraction, was a native of Ohio. While still a young man, he had removed to Port Gibson and established himself in the practice of medicine. The poet's mother was a native of New York, but of New England ancestry. As Miss Elizabeth Allen, she taught for several years in the Port Gibson Female College. A few months after Irwin's

birth, the Russell family moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where they lived until the outbreak of the Civil War. Then, as Dr. Russell sympathized with the South and wished to throw in his lot with the Confederacy in the impending struggle, he returned with his family to Port Gibson.

While the Russells were living in St. Louis, Irwin had been placed in school. He was a remarkably precocious boy, having learned, so it is said, at the age of four to read as well as a grown person, and being able at the age of six to read and understand Milton's poems. After his father returned to Port Gibson, the boy's education was continued in the local schools. So wide and general was his information, that he earned among his companions the nickname, "the walking encyclopedia." When the war was over, Dr. Russell went again to St. Louis where he remained until Irwin finished his course at the University of St. Louis, then a Jesuit college. In college Irwin showed remarkable aptitude for study and evinced particular ability in the higher mathematics. After graduating in 1869, he returned with his parents to Port Gibson and without much heartiness began studying law in the office of Judge L. N. Baldwin. He was admitted to the bar at the early age of nineteen; but, discouraged by the uncongeniality of this profession, he gave it up in a few months. Then began the quest of the career best suited

to his special faculties, a quest which was hardly terminated at the end of his life.

During these years of finding himself he continued to live in Port Gibson, then a quiet village thoroughly typical of the South. Its leading citizens were planters, who had their plantations in the near-by country, a few lawyers and politicians, the ministers of the several churches, and two or three physicians. Though impoverished by the war, these planters and professional men (among them were the Humphreys, the John Taylor Moores, the Ellets, and a score of other well-known families of southern Mississippi) still preserved much of the delightful culture and social life that had marked the *antebellum* South. To the maturer element of the community, Irwin Russell, like many another youth of brilliant gifts and versatile attainments standing irresolute on the threshold of manhood and uncertain of his chief faculty, must have seemed the very pattern of an idler. But his, like the idleness of Stevenson, consisted not "in doing nothing, but in doing a great deal not recognized in the dogmatic formularies of the ruling classes."

As might be expected, he spent much time in wide and miscellaneous reading. In poetry he covered a wide range,—from the older English poetry as found in Chaucer and Percy's "Reliques," through the Elizabethan dramatists and Herrick, and down to the later

poetry of Burns, Byron, and Shelley. Novels of adventure he also read eagerly—the sea tales of Marryat and the Indian tales of Cooper being favorites. To his naturally keen sense of humor, the writings of Sterne, Fielding, Smollett, Dickens, Thackeray, Molière, and Rabelais made a strong appeal. But books did not occupy his life altogether. His versatility and artistic talents led him to various accomplishments. An interest in printing resulted in his owning a small printing outfit with which he produced very tasteful specimens of typography. Though this work never became more than a means to furnish amusement and novelty, yet he was inclined for a while to take it up seriously as a profession and did make himself a connoisseur in typesetting. Literary genius, in his case, went hand in hand with artistic skill in other directions. He had a talent for drawing which had been cultivated to a slight extent. As would be expected, his sense of the humorous made his work largely caricature. So congenial to him was this facility with his pencil that at one time he thought of becoming an architect. He was also gifted with rare musical ability. His talent in this direction was entirely uncultivated, but even as a child he was expert on the banjo and the piano.

Though his health was never robust and his temperament inclined him to a studious and contemplative life, yet he was not unsocial. His many attractive per-

sonal qualities and accomplishments made his friends insist that he come out among them. In the social life of the town he took a conspicuous part. He was the leading spirit in amateur theatricals and other entertainments, not only serving as the organizer of such affairs, but as one of the leading participators. The vein of fun and love of foolery that was an ingrained part of his nature led to vagaries and practical jokes that must have added greatly to the gaiety of life in Port Gibson, especially among the younger element.

Interesting points regarding his appearance and disposition are given in the following passage:[1]

> His disposition was remarkably gentle, his voice low and musical, and his smile exceedingly winning, with an indescribable expression of sadness and resignation. . . . His carriage was erect, with a slight stoop of the shoulder and inclination of the head; and he walked with a swinging gait, apparently gazing afar off, his long arms dangling by his side. Yet though apparently not observant of his surroundings, and handicapped by the blindness of one eye and near-sightedness of the other, he saw much that was not obvious to the ordinary observer, and there were few of his walks that did not reward him with suggestion. . . . He would carry home with him in his mind's eye everything that was grotesque. . . . His love of nature was a passion, and no one enjoyed more or described better a splendid sunset, a gorgeous Southern forest, or any natural scene. He saw every

[1] This and the other quotations in this article are taken, unless otherwise noted, from a valuable personal account of Irwin Russell contributed by his cousin and intimate friend, C. C. Marble, to *The Critic* for October 27 and November 3, 1888 (Vol. XIII, pp. 199, 213).

bird, took note of every conformation of nature, was familiar with the names of trees and plants, had an eye for prospects, and an ear for sounds and exquisite sensitiveness for nature's perfumes, and a rollicking enjoyment of the country. . . . But illness made him moody, and a reaction always followed what seemed to be physical exhilaration.

During this period in his life, Russell showed a restlessness and fondness for new scenes and adventures that led to his leaving home on several occasions, sometimes with, and sometimes without, the sanction of his parents. When he was about nineteen and under the spell of Marryat's sea stories, he disappeared from home, and after a search of six weeks was found living in a sailors' boarding house in New Orleans. He had even endeavored to carry his wanderings farther and had rowed out to a ship about to sail for the Mediterranean to interview the captain in regard to shipping as a sailor. But becoming aware of the probability of hard and long service without the opportunity he craved to see life, he had thought better of his determination and given it up. At other times he felt keenly the call of the West. Once he started to California, where an uncle was living, but after running through foolishly in Tennessee the money with which he was provided, and becoming ill, he returned home. On another occasion, he went to Texas and spent several months there, but again an empty purse and illness sent him back to Port Gibson.

Like many another among men of letters and artists with the sensitive organization of genius, Russell had his defects of temperament. The moods of depression and the attempts to establish himself anew in other parts already mentioned were undoubtedly to some extent due to his realization of the losing struggle between his higher nature with its many attractive and lovable qualities and his lower nature which particularly manifested itself in a craving for stimulants. Even if space permitted, there would seem to be no need after the lapse of years to dwell on the details of this struggle. Suffice it to say that his was an instance where one should be charitable to a young man floundering through the stormy seas of adolescence, and judge in the spirit of those gentle words of Carlyle in regard to Burns, "Granted, the ship comes into harbor with shrouds and tackle damaged; the pilot is blameworthy; he has not been all-wise and all-powerful; but to know *how* blameworthy, tell us first whether his voyage has been round the Globe, or only to Ramsgate and the Isle of Dogs."

By his contributions to the local papers, Russell very early drew the attention of his friends to his gift for humorous poetry. His first poem—a clever but juvenile skit on the origin of footbinding in China, entitled, "A Chinese Tale"—appeared about 1869. The verses entitled, "Ships from the Sea," published in the *Port*

Gibson Standard of October 13, 1871, received greater attention locally. They were a graceful reply to a poem in a preceding number of the *Standard* by Miss Sallie Massie, one of the young ladies of the town and a friend of Russell's, who had signed it "Ishmael," because, as she explained, it would share the fate of Ishmael—every man's hand would be against it. It is impossible now to determine with what poem he began the use of Negro dialect. Very likely the earlier dialect poems were published in local papers, but those contributed to the Bric-a-Brac department of *Scribner's Monthly* represent the earliest at present known. The first of these—"Uncle Cap Interviewed"—appeared in January, 1876, and during the next four years most of Russell's other better known poems appeared in the same magazine. His work also appeared in *Appletons' Magazine, Puck,* and other periodicals. As much of his poetry was published anonymously or under various pen names ("Job Case" being one of these), it is probable that many of his poems still elude collection.

How Russell began to make use of Negro dialect and Negro character may fortunately be given substantially in his own words:

> It was almost an inspiration. You know I am something of a banjoist. Well, one evening I was sitting in our back yard in old Mississippi "twanging" on the banjo, when I

heard our colored domestic, an old darky of the Aunt Dinah type—singing one of the outlandish campmeeting hymns of which the race is so fond. She was an extremely "'ligious" character, and, although seized with the impulse to do so, I hesitated to take up the tune and finish it. I did so, however; and in the dialect I have adopted, which I then thought and still think is in strict conformity to their use of it. I proceeded as one inspired, to compose verse after verse, of the most absurd and extravagant, and, to her irreverent rime ever before invented, all the while accompanying it on the banjo and imitating the fashion of the plantation Negro. . . . I was then about sixteen, and as I had soon after a like inclination to versify, was myself pleased with the performance, and it was accepted by a publisher, I have continued to work the vein indefinitely.

Thus the years were passed until the epidemic of yellow fever in the summer of 1878 brought days of sterner stress profoundly influencing the subsequent year and a half of Russell's life. When the fever reached Port Gibson, every one who could afford to do so promptly "refugeed." This left in the town a remnant to suffer the ravages of the disease. With the heroism of his profession, Dr. Russell stayed to serve the sick, and Irwin, who felt immunity because of having survived an attack of the fever when he was but a few weeks old, stayed with his father to help in the nursing. Vivid accounts of how he cared for the fever-stricken victims and buried the dead are contained in Russell's letters of this period. In one of them, written on September 13, 1878, he says:

I am worn out from nursing night and day, and performing such other duties as were mine as a "Howard"—and simply as a man. Four days ago I *for the first time in a month* sat down to a regularly cooked and served meal. I have been living as Doctor Wango Tango of Nursery fame, "on a biscuit a day"—when I could get it. Between six and seven hundred people (out of sixteen hundred) remained in town to face the fever. Out of these there have been about five hundred and seventy cases, and one hundred and eighteen deaths, up to this time. I will not attempt to give you an idea of the awful horrors I have seen—among which I have lived for the past five or six weeks—besides which I have seen or heard nothing whatever. Hendrick Conscience, Boccaccio, and Defoe tried to describe similar scenes, and I now realize how utterly they failed. No descriptions can convey a tithe of the reality.

Probably wishing to get away from scenes so heavily charged with sadness as well as desiring to go where his literary work could be done under more favorable circumstances, Russell left Port Gibson in the latter part of December, 1878, and went to New York. In this move he had his father's help and encouragement, and on his arrival in New York, he met with a cordial welcome from those who knew him through his magazine contributions. Such men as Henry C. Bunner, the editor of *Puck,* Richard Watson Gilder, and Robert Underwood Johnson of the staff of *Scribner's Monthly,* took great interest in him and gave every encouragement to his work. Under such auspices it would seem that all was to be fair sailing. But the gods willed it not so. The environment was clearly

not propitious to his best work. As some one has expressed it, "the balmy breezes of the South were needed to inspire him and the simple Negro folk could not speak through him while he was away from the Southland." His heart became heavy laden because of the death in May, 1879, of his idolized father from overwork in the yellow fever epidemic of the preceding summer. His funds became exhausted but pride held him back from asking assistance of his friends. Illness came, and before he was really convalescent, he formed a determination to return at once to the South.

In August, 1879, Russell reached New Orleans, having worked his way thither from New York as a fireman on the *Knickerbocker*. In speaking of this experience afterwards to a friend, he said: "Gaunt and weak and wretched as I was, they took me, and I did a coal heaver's and fireman's duty almost all the way down. Landed here, I had no money, no friends, no clothes." But in New Orleans he quickly found, as he always did everywhere, friends willing to do all in their power for him. He easily secured a position on the staff of the New Orleans *Times* and made to it such contributions in prose and verse as his health permitted. But the hardships of the trip to New Orleans as well as temptations unsuccessfully withstood had told severely on the frail physique and he seemed to realize that the sands of his hour-glass were running

low. By a strange premonition, his last published verses were upon the subject of his own grave. In the poem entitled "The Cemetery," published anonymously in the *Times* barely ten days before his death, his thought pathetically reverted to his childhood home and the old cemetery where his father was buried and where he hoped to lie. But pride and sensitiveness kept him from appealing in his last illness for help to any of his own or his father's many friends in New Orleans, any one of whom would gladly have made provision for his needs, or from making his plight known to his mother, who had removed after the death of Dr. Russell to California. On December 23, 1879, in an unpretentious boarding house at 73 Franklin Street, attended in his last moments by his Irish landlady, Russell's life came to an end. "True it was," as the *Times* expressed it in an editorial tribute published the day after his death, "that few men ever got so many buffets from the hand of fate, and still fewer, so little benefit. His existence was a struggle with necessity from the time he left his home, and although his prospects were always fine, he never lived to establish himself anywhere."

Russell's career closed just as he was beginning to make writing a serious occupation. Up to the last few years of his life he had cared little for the products of his pen save as they might amuse his friends. He com-

posed with abandon when the mood was upon him, and left his work largely as it first came into being. Even what is generally considered his masterpiece, "Christmas Night in the Quarters," was not carefully constructed, but was written on the spur of the moment. The poem that Russell himself considered his best production, "Nebuchadnezzar," was written immediately after watching an altercation between a Negro and his mule on one of the streets of Port Gibson. The circumstances of the composition of "Dat Peter" were probably characteristic of much of his work. As Russell was loafing one day about the office of the Port Gibson *Reveille,* whither his fondness for processes of printing frequently led him, the editor casually asked him to furnish something to fill up space in the forthcoming number. Russell seized a piece of proof paper, and, holding it against the door of the office, produced in a few minutes a poem which ranks among his best. In the files of this newspaper the poem remained buried until discovered a few years ago. If it had not been for the zeal of his friends in New York, who nine years after his death collected into a volume most of the poems that had appeared in *Scribner's Monthly* and in other periodicals, it is likely that all of his work would have remained buried in the dusty files of magazines and newspapers.

Russell's humorous poems in plain English and in

so-called Irish are unusually clever in their way. His imitations of the English poets show his remarkable gift for catching the style of other writers, and, if he had lived to carry out his purpose of continuing these imitations until he had represented all of the chief English poets, he would have established himself as an American parodist worthy of ranking with the English Calverley. The poems in serious vein to which he largely devoted himself in the latter months of his life show that his work in this new direction was worthy of his genius. But the great value of his work lies in the faithfulness of his portrayal of the Negro. In this field he has had no superior.

In his treatment of the Negro Russell aimed not at using him as a means of enhancing old Southern life, as has been done by so many who have made literary use of the Negro, but at giving the Negro's characteristics. The result is a portrayal that is not only more than usually realistic, but correspondingly fuller and more detailed. The Negro thus presented was neither the slave nor the modern type, but that which Russell's opportunities for observation fitted him especially to portray, the "old time darky,"—that is, the free Negro, who, having been trained in slavery, retained much of the deference of the old régime in his attitude toward the white people. The characteristics of this type are to be seen in a remarkably broad way in

Russell's poems. In them may be found the Negro's personal affection for his master and his devoted allegiance to the master's family even after being freed; his general respect for white people, especially those who belong to the "quality"; his religiousness with its anthropomorphism, its naïve treatment of Biblical events, and its use of every-day things and facts in teaching ethical truth; his superstition; his faculty for observation and shrewdness in the combination of the facts he sees, shown by the pithy sayings uttered in his moods of philosophizing, sometimes, perhaps, with only himself or his mule or dog as audience; his love of music and the dance and special festivities; his ignorance of the world and awe of legal customs; his peccadillos, such as dishonesty and deceitfulness, which his traits of good-nature and kindness condone; his common sense and his homely precepts of wit and wisdom. In its various phases Russell has accurately reproduced the childlike spirit of the Negro, an understanding of which is the key to so much in his character.

The dialect of Russell's poems is that spoken by the Mississippi Negroes. Although he is sometimes said to be inaccurate in dialect, the charge seems unjust. The nicety of feeling for language so frequently evidenced in Russell's work would be strong *a priori* ground for believing he had faithfully reproduced the speech of the Mississippi Negroes. Moreover, to this

must be added his own claim that the dialect used by him was "in strict conformity to their use of it." Negro speech in the South had in the seventies, and still has, though of course to a less extent, local dialectic peculiarities. The speech of the Mississippi Negroes differed somewhat from those of Virginia or Georgia. Russell's ear was keen enough to detect this fact, as one of his letters shows. On the whole, it seems that Russell was a close student of dialect and that he used it with reasonable accuracy.

His sympathetic portrayal could only come from a poet's deep sense of the worth of Negro character. Russell's words on this point are deserving of note:

> Many think the vein a limited one, but I tell you it is inexhaustible. The Southern Negro has only just so much civilization as his contact with the white man has given him. He has been only indirectly influenced by the discoveries of science, the inventions of human ingenuity and the general progress of mankind. Without education or social intercourse with intelligent and cultivated people, his thought has been necessarily original, and that has done more to prove the proximate truth of the now common saying, *Vox populi, vox Dei,* than anything in the history of the white man. He has not been controlled in his convictions by historic precedent, and yet he has often manifested a foresight and wisdom in practical matters worthy of the higher races. You may call it instinct, imitation, what you will; it has nevertheless a foundation. I am a Democrat, was a rebel, but I have long felt that the Negro, even in his submission and servitude, was conscious of his higher nature and must some day assert it. The white master alone stood in the way of it. I have felt that the soul should not be bound and must find a way for

itself to freedom. The Negro race, too, in spite of oppression, has retained qualities found in few others under like circumstances. Gratitude it has always been distinguished for; hospitality and helpfulness are its natural creed; brutality, considering the prodigious depth of its degradation, is unusual. It does not lack courage, industry, self-denial, or virtue. The petty vices, it is true, are common, and perhaps, inevitable, and are the best assurance of the absence of those that are more formidable and dangerous. Surely the Anglo-Saxon, deprived of the ordinary helps and stimulants of civilization, would have degenerated into the beast of the field. So the Negro has done an enormous amount of thinking, and with only such forms of expression as his circumstances furnished him, he indulges in paradox, hyperbola, aphorism, sententious comparison. He treasures his traditions, he is enthusiastic, patient, long suffering, religious, reverent. Is there not poetry in the character? I say there is. But it is a despised and humble race, and is not contemplated in this aspect.

This deep sense of the possibilities of Negro character in literature led Russell to form plans for using it in works of larger compass than short poems. He attempted a play in Negro dialect. This was written under agreement with a theatrical manager in New York for its production. But being anxious to try it out before sending it on, Russell secured the coöperation of his friends in Port Gibson for an amateur performance. Rehearsals were in progress at the time of the yellow fever outbreak, but in the resulting confusion all the parts were lost by those to whom rôles were assigned, and hardly any details regarding the play can now be recovered. He also contemplated writing a

Negro novel. In regard to this scheme he wrote in 1877, enthusiastically:

I have just found something—and I can't help showing it to you right away, and asking what you think of it. I am not much given to emotion of any sort, yet this thing excites me a little (only a few degrees, however, and not to the gushing point). Just this minute I have stumbled over a rarety, if not a valuable: the same being more particularly known and described as an idea. . . .

In short it occurs to me to write a *Negro novel.* It is a thing entirely new—nobody has ever tried it. Negro lovers —negro preachers—Negro "literary and malevolent" "sieties"—Negro saints and Negro sinners—think of what mines of humor and pathos, plot and character, sense and nonsense, are here awaiting development! I shall take my little dibble and scratch away on the surface. Though I may not do more than strike "color," I shall still work *con amore.* I will at least have all the advantages of opportunity—as I have lived long among the Negroes (as also long enough *away from them* to appreciate their peculiarities); understand their character, disposition, language, customs and habits; have studied them; and have them continually before me. I shall begin immediately, and I think that I can finish the manuscript in sixty days.

It really seems odd that nothing of the kind has yet been attempted. Nothing ever has, that I know of. "Uncle Tom's Cabin," powerfully written as it is, gives no more true idea of Negro life and character than one could get from the Nautical Almanac—and like most other political documents, is quite the reverse of true in almost every respect. The book I purpose making shall be true, if nothing else is, and politics shall have no part in its substance or its spirit. There is another point that is novel,—in an American novel.

It is believed that Russell had completed some of the chapters of this proposed novel, but if so, they have been

lost. There exists, however, an outline drawn up by him for a novel in which it is evident that as early as 1875 he was contemplating using Negro character to a considerable extent in connection with a story dealing mainly with a group of white persons. Another outline in existence shows that later he thought of preparing a volume of prose sketches under the title, "Cotton Bolls Gathered in Mississippi." Had such a book been finished the gift of dramatic portrayal that Russell showed in such poems as "Christmas Night in the Quarters" would have made it a valuable picture of the life of his times among the Negroes and the white people of Southern Mississippi.

This evident desire to try his ability in prose sketches and stories indicates that, had Russell lived, he would have produced work that would have entitled him to rank as pioneer in this field as well as in dialect poetry. During his life, only two short stories were published, and owing to the fact that they appeared in a juvenile magazine, did not command the attention they deserved. But it must be remembered that there was not then among the magazines the demand for material of this kind that came later, and that even so striking a story as Thomas Nelson Page's "Marse Chan" remained, in the early eighties, in the hands of *The Century Magazine* four years before it was timidly used. Among Russell's unpublished manuscripts are

several stories showing convincingly many of the qualities essential to success. If Russell had lived to develop this side of his genius, he would perhaps have proved well-founded the statement made of him by Joel Chandler Harris in a private letter, "Had he been spared to letters, all the rest of us would have taken back seats so far as the representation of life in the South is concerned."

Although Russell's work must remain a fragment, a mere foretaste of what he might have achieved, it is evident that the loss to literature by his early death was assuredly not small. Had his life been longer, he might have made a deeper mark on American literature though he could not have made a more original impress than he had already done through that deep poetic vision that saw pathos and humor and beauty in the humble life that others had contemned.

. . . . . .

[After the foregoing sketch had been put into type, an interesting series of nearly seventy letters by Irwin Russell came to hand. Extending from the early autumn of 1875 to the end of 1878, they cover the period of his rapidly developing genius and present valuable material concerning his personal history and literary plans.

In the light of these letters, it is necessary to modify the previous statement regarding Russell's abandoning

the profession of law. In the autumn of 1877, he recommenced practice in association with his old preceptor, Judge Baldwin, who had one of the most extensive civil practices among the Mississippi lawyers of that time. The fact that Judge Baldwin, who was getting on in years, selected Russell as his assistant and entrusted the management of important cases to him was a flattering testimony to Russell's ability. Russell was very busily engaged at his profession until the outbreak of yellow fever at the end of the summer of 1878. This calamity coming on the heels of the troublous reconstruction times brought financial hardships to the entire section that were most discouraging, and Russell, feeling that his prospects were destroyed, decided to go to New York.

This modification of the previous statement regarding Russell's relation to his profession would be inconsequential were it not that the new view shows convincingly that he was finding himself more and more as he approached mature years. The increasing steadiness of purpose which is emphatically shown by this fact and in other ways in this series of letters compels belief that had Russell's life been longer his achievement in literature would have been proportionately greater, and intensifies the regret that, as it is, he is one of the "inheritors of unfulfilled renown" whose life was of singular promise and tragedy.]

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Christmas-night in the Quarters	3
Nebuchadnezzar	25
Business in Mississippi	28
Selling a Dog	34
Uncle Nick on Fishing	37
Norvern People	42
Wherefore He Prays That a Warrant May Issue	45
The Mississippi Witness	53
Blind Ned	57
Mahsr John	63
Precepts at Parting	69
Half-way Doin's	74
A Sermon for the Sisters	79
Uncle Cap Interviewed	84
The Old Hostler's Experience	90
Rev. Henry's War-song	94
Larry's on the Force	96
The Irish Eclipse	102
A Practical Young Woman	105
The Polyphone	108
The First Client	114

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Knight and the Squire	119
Nine Graves in Edinbro	125
Hope	130
Studies in Style	132
Along the Line	137
Her Conquest	143
Nelly	145
Cosmos	147
An Exchange	149
The Cemetery	150
Going	152
Dat Peter	155
Summer Idyllers	158
The Kingdom Gate	164
The Mockingbird	166
Ships from the Sea	168
Uncle Caleb's Views	171
Pot-Liquor	175
The Mississippi Miracle	178

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"*Balance all!*—now step out rightly" . *Frontispiece*

PAGE

"O Mahsr! let dis gath'rin' fin' a blessin' in yo' sight!" 7

"Georgy Sam" 11

Aunt Cassy 16

"Ol' Noah kep' a-nailin'" 19

"De ha'r 's so long an' thick an' strong" . . . 22

"Wuz dat a cannon shot me?" 27

"What! de cotton ain't de same" 30

"You mus' keep yo' cork a-bobbin'" 40

"Las' spring I foun' a little chicken runnin' in de road" 46

"An' me an' Phyllis had important bizness at de doah" 49

"Yoah Honah, an' de jury" 52

"Is dat you, Mahsr Bob?" 59

Dat Bill 62

Mulatter Bill a'dribin' 65

A-stretchin' an' crowin' 70

"But nebber git airy" 72

"Keep a-hoein' an' a-scrapin'" 77

"I 's fust clumb up de knowledge-tree" 81

"Good-mornin', Mahsr; I 's tol'able myself" . . 86

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

"An' now I simply 'vises you" 92

"And ain't ye dhrissed!" 97

"He houlds his shtick convanient to be tappin' some wan down" 100

He sat him down and wrote in rhyme 106

Professor Jones 109

Sir Mortimer rode with his banner displayed . . 122

The sexton 127

"There come a break, and his office call" . . . 140

"Some of 'em 'z long as that" 161

"Dat 's glorified music he 's singin' " 167

"Go in dat bresh, and dribe de 'possums' king out" 176

CHRISTMAS-NIGHT IN THE QUARTERS

AND OTHER POEMS

CHRISTMAS-NIGHT IN THE QUARTERS

WHEN merry Christmas-day is done
And Christmas-night is just begun;
While clouds in slow procession drift,
To wish the moon-man "Christmas gift,"
Yet linger overhead, to know
What causes all the stir below;
At Uncle Johnny Booker's ball
The darkies hold high carnival.
From all the country-side they throng,
With laughter, shouts, and scraps of song,—
Their whole deportment plainly showing
That to the Frolic they are going.
Some take the path with shoes in hand,
To traverse muddy bottom-land;
Aristocrats their steeds bestride—
Four on a mule, behold them ride!

And ten great oxen draw apace
The wagon from "de odder place,"
With forty guests, whose conversation
Betokens glad anticipation.
Not so with him who drives: old Jim
Is sagely solemn, hard, and grim,
And frolics have no joys for him.
He seldom speaks but to condemn—
Or utter some wise apothegm—
Or else, some crabbed thought pursuing,
Talk to his team, as now he 's doing:

Come up heah, Star! Yee-bawee!
  You alluz is a-laggin'—
Mus' be you think I 's dead,
  An' dis de huss you 's draggin'—
You 's 'mos' too lazy to draw yo' bref'
  Let 'lone drawin' de waggin.

CHRISTMAS-NIGHT

Dis team—quit bel'rin', sah!
De ladies don't submit 'at—
Dis team—you ol' fool ox,
You heah me tell you quit 'at?
Dis team 's des like de 'Nited States;
Dat 's what I 's tryin' to git at!

De people rides behin',
De pollytishners haulin'—
Sh'u'd be a well-bruk ox,
To foller dat ar callin'—
An' sometimes nuffin won't do dem steers,
But what dey mus' be stallin'!

Woo bahgh! Buck-kannon! Yes, sar,
Sometimes dey will be stickin';
An' den, fus thing dey knows,
Dey takes a rale good lickin'.
De folks gits down: an' den watch out
For hommerin' an' kickin'.

CHRISTMAS-NIGHT

Dey blows upon dey hands,
  Den flings 'em wid de nails up,
Jumps up an' cracks dey heels,
  An' pruzently dey sails up,
An' makes dem oxen hump deysef,
  By twistin' all dey tails up!

In this our age of printer's ink
'T is books that show us how to think—
The rule reversed, and set at naught,
That held that books were born of thought.
We form our minds by pedants' rules,
And all we know is from the schools;
And when we work, or when we play,
We do it in an ordered way—
And Nature's self pronounce a ban on,
Whene'er she dares transgress a canon.

"O Mahsr! let dis gath'rin' fin' a blessin' in yo' sight!"

CHRISTMAS-NIGHT

Untrammeled thus the simple race is
That "wuks the craps" on cotton places.
Original in act and thought,
Because unlearned and untaught.
Observe them at their Christmas party:
How unrestrained their mirth—how hearty!
How many things they say and do
That never would occur to you!
See Brudder Brown—whose saving grace
Would sanctify a quarter-race—
Out on the crowded floor advance,
To "beg a blessin' on dis dance."

O Mahsr! let dis gath'rin' fin' a blessin' in yo' sight!
Don't jedge us hard fur what we does—you know it 's Chrismus-night;

An' all de balunce ob de yeah we does as right 's
we kin.
Ef dancin 's wrong, O Mahsr! let de time excuse
de sin!

We labors in de vineya'd, wukin' hard an' wukin'
true;
Now, shorely you won't notus, ef we eats a grape
or two,
An' takes a leetle holiday,—a leetle restin'-
spell,—
Bekase, nex' week, we 'll start in fresh, an' labor
twicet as well.

Remember, Mahsr,—min' dis now,—de sinfull-
ness ob sin
Is 'pendin' 'pon de sperrit what we goes an' does
it in:
An' in a righchis frame ob min' we 's gwine to
dance an' sing,

A-feelin' like King David, when he cut de
pigeon-wing.

It seems to me—indeed it do—I mebbe mout be
wrong—
That people raly *ought* to dance, when Chrismus
comes along;
Des dance bekase dey 's happy—like de birds hops
in de trees,
De pine-top fiddle soundin' to de bowin' ob de
breeze.

We has no ark to dance afore, like Isrul's prophet
king;
We has no harp to soun' de chords, to holp us out
to sing;
But 'cordin' to de gif's we has we does de bes'
we knows,
An' folks don't 'spise the vi'let-flower bekase it
ain't de rose.

"Georgy Sam"

CHRISTMAS-NIGHT

You bless us, please, sah, eben ef we 's doin' wrong to-night;
Kase den we 'll need de blessin' more 'n ef we 's doin' right;
An' let de blessin' stay wid us, untel we comes to die,
An' goes to keep our Chrismus wid dem sheriffs in de sky!

Yes, tell dem preshis anguls we 's a-gwine to jine 'em soon:
Our voices we 's a-trainin' fur to sing de glory tune;
We 's ready when you wants us, an' it ain't no matter when—
O Mahsr! call yo' chillen soon, an' take 'em home! Amen.

CHRISTMAS-NIGHT

The rev'rend man is scarcely through,
When all the noise begins anew,
And with such force assaults the ears,
That through the din one hardly hears
Old fiddling Josey "sound his A,"
Correct the pitch, begin to play,
Stop, satisfied, then, with the bow,
Rap out the signal dancers know:

Git yo' pardners, fust kwattilion!
Stomp yo' feet, an' raise 'em high;
Tune is: "Oh! dat water-million!
Gwine to git to home bime-bye."
S'lute yo' pardners!—scrape perlitely—
Don't be bumpin' gin de res'—
Balance all!—now, step out rightly;
Alluz dance yo' lebbel bes'.

CHRISTMAS-NIGHT

Fo'wa'd foah!—whoop up, niggers!
Back ag'in!—don't be so slow!—
Swing cornahs!—min' de figgers!
When I hollers, den yo' go.
Top ladies cross ober!
Hol' on, till I takes a dram—
Gemmen solo!—yes, *I 's* sober—
Cain't say how de fiddle am.
Hands around!—hol' up yo' faces,
Don't be lookin' at yo' feet!
Swing yo' pardners to yo' places!
Dat 's de way—dat 's hard to beat.
Sides for'w'd!—when you 's ready—
Make a bow as low 's you kin!
Swing acrost wid opp'site lady!
Now we 'll let you swap ag'in:
Ladies change!—shet up dat talkin';
Do yo' talkin' arter while!
Right and lef'!—don't want no walkin'—
Make yo' steps, an' show yo' style!

And so the "set" proceeds—its length
Determined by the dancers' strength;
And all agree to yield the palm
For grace and skill to "Georgy Sam,"
Who stamps so hard, and leaps so high,
"Des watch him!" is the wond'ring cry—
"De nigger mus' be, for a fac',
Own cousin to a jumpin'-jack!"
On, on, the restless fiddle sounds,
Still chorused by the curs and hounds;
Dance after dance succeeding fast,
Till supper is announced at last.
That scene—but why attempt to show it?
The most inventive modern poet,
In fine new words whose hope and trust is,
Could form no phrase to do it justice!
When supper ends—that is not so soon—
The fiddle strikes the same old tune;
The dancers pound the floor again,
With all they have of might and main;

CHRISTMAS-NIGHT

Old gossips, *almost* turning pale,
Attend Aunt Cassy's gruesome tale
Of conjurors, and ghosts, and devils,
That in the smoke-house hold their revels;

Aunt Cassy

Each drowsy baby droops his head,
Yet scorns the very thought of bed:—
So wears the night, and wears so fast,
All wonder when they find it past.
And hear the signal sound to go
From what few cocks are left to crow.
Then, one and all, you hear them shout:
"Hi! Booker! fotch de banjo out,

An' gib us *one* song 'fore we goes—
One ob de berry bes' you knows!"
Responding to the welcome call,
He takes the banjo from the wall,
And tunes the strings with skill and care,
Then strikes them with a master's air,
And tells, in melody and rime,
This legend of the olden time:

Go 'way, fiddle! folks is tired o' hearin' you a-squakin'.
Keep silence fur yo' betters!—don't you heah de banjo talkin'?
About de 'possum's tail she 's gwine to lecter—ladies, listen!—
About de ha'r whut is n't da, an' why de ha'r is missin':

"Dar 's gwine to be a' oberflow," said Noah,
lookin' solemn—
Fur Noah tuk the "Herald," an' he read de ribber
column—
An' so he sot his hands to wuk a-cl'arin' timber-
patches,
And 'lowed he 's gwine to build a boat to beat the
steamah *Natchez*.

Ol' Noah kep' a-nailin' an' a-chippin' an' a-
sawin';
An' all de wicked neighbors kep' a-laughin' an' a-
pshawin';
But Noah did n't min' 'em, knowin' whut wuz
gwine to happen:
An' forty days an' forty nights de rain it kep' a-
drappin'.

Now, Noah had done cotched a lot ob ebry sort
o' beas'es—

"Ol' Noah kep' a-nailin'"

Ob all de shows a-trabbelin', it beat 'em all to pieces!

He had a Morgan colt an' sebral head o' Jarsey cattle—

An' druv 'em 'board de Ark as soon 's he heered de thunder rattle.

Den sech anoder fall ob rain!—it come so awful hebby,

De ribber riz immejitly, an' busted troo de lebbee;

De people all wuz drownded out—'cep' Noah an' de critters,

An' men he 'd hired to work de boat—an' one to mix de bitters.

De Ark she kep' a-sailin' an' a-sailin' *an'* a-sailin';

De lion got his dander up, an' like to bruk de palin';

De sarpents hissed; de painters yelled; tell, whut wid all de fussin',

You c'u'd n't hardly heah de mate a-bossin' 'roun' an' cussin'.

Now, Ham, de only nigger whut wuz runnin' on de packet,
Got lonesome in de barber-shop, an' c'u'd n't stan' de racket;
An' so, fur to amuse he-se'f, he steamed some wood an' bent it,
An' soon he had a banjo made—de fust dat wuz invented.

He wet de ledder, stretched it on; made bridge an' screws an' aprin;
An' fitted in a proper neck—'t wuz berry long an' tap'rin';
He tuk some tin, an' twisted him a thimble fur to ring it;
An' den de mighty question riz: how wuz he gwine to string it?

De 'possum had as fine a tail as dis dat I 's a-singin';

De ha'r 's so long an' thick an' strong,—des fit fur banjo-stringin';

"De ha'r 's so long an' thick an' strong"

Dat nigger shaved 'em off as short as wash-day-dinner graces;

An' sorted ob 'em by de size, f'om little E's to basses.

He strung her, tuned her, struck a jig,—'t wuz "Nebber min' de wedder,"—

She soun' like forty-lebben bands a-playin' all togedder;
Some went to pattin'; some to dancin': Noah called de figgers;
An' Ham he sot an' knocked de tune, de happiest ob niggers!

Now, sence dat time—it 's mighty strange—dere 's not de slightes' showin'
Ob any ha'r at all upon de 'possum's tail a-growin';
An' curi's, too, dat nigger's ways: his people nebber los' 'em—
Fur whar you finds de nigger—dar 's de banjo an' de 'possum!

The night is spent; and as the day
Throws up the first faint flash of gray,
The guests pursue their homeward way;
And through the field beyond the gin,

CHRISTMAS-NIGHT

Just as the stars are going in,
See Santa Claus departing—grieving—
His own dear Land of Cotton leaving.
His work is done; he fain would rest
Where people know and love him best.
He pauses, listens, looks about;
But go he must: his pass is out.
So, coughing down the rising tears,
He climbs the fence and disappears.
And thus observes a colored youth
(The common sentiment, in sooth):
"Oh! what a blessin' 't wud ha' been,
Ef Santy had been born a twin!
We 'd hab two Chrismuses a yeah—
Or p'r'aps *one* brudder 'd *settle* heah!"

NEBUCHADNEZZAR

YOU, Nebuchadnezzah, whoa, sah!
Whar is you tryin' to go, sah?
I 'd hab you fur to know, sah,
I 's a-holdin' ob de lines.
You better stop dat prancin';
You 's pow'ful fond ob dancin',
But I 'll bet my yeah 's advancin'
Dat I 'll cure you ob yo' shines.

Look heah, mule! Better min' out;
Fus' t'ing you know you 'll fin' out
How quick I 'll wear dis line out
On your ugly stubbo'n back.
You need n't try to steal up
An' lif' dat precious heel up;

NEBUCHADNEZZAR

You 's got to plow dis fiel' up,
You has, sah, fur a fac'.
Dar, *dat 's* de way to do it!
He 's comin' right down to it;
Jes watch him plowin' troo it!
Dis nigger ain't no fool.
Some folks dey would 'a' beat him;
Now, dat would only heat him—
I know jes how to treat him:
You mus' *reason* wid a mule.

He minds me like a nigger.
If he wuz only bigger
He 'd fotch a mighty figger,
He would, I *tell* you! Yes, sah!
See how he keeps a-clickin'!
He 's as gentle as a chickin,
An' nebber thinks o' kickin'—
Whoa dar! Nebuchadnezzah!

NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Is dis heah me, or not me?
Or is de debbil got me?

"Wuz dat a cannon shot me?"

Wuz dat a cannon shot me?
  Hab I laid heah more 'n a week?
Dat mule do kick amazin'!
De beast was sp'iled in raisin'—
But now I s'pect he 's grazin'
  On de oder side de creek.

BUSINESS IN MISSISSIPPI

WHY, howdy, Mahsr Johnny! Is you
gone to keepin' store?
Well, sah, I is surprised! I nebber heard ob dat
afore.
Say, ain't you gwine to gib me piece o' good to-
bacco, please?
I 's 'long wid you in Georgia, time we all wuz
refugees.

I know'd you would; I alluz tells the people,
white an' black,
Dat you 's a r'al gen'l'man, an' dat 's de libin'
fac'—
Yes, sah, dat 's what I tells 'em, an' it 's nuffin else
but true,
An' all de cullud people thinks a mighty heap ob
you.

BUSINESS IN MISSISSIPPI

Look heah, sah, don't you want to buy some cotton? Yes, you do;
Dere 's oder people wants it, but I 'd rader sell to you.
How much? Oh, jes a bale—dat on de wagon in de street—
Dis heah 's de sample,—dis cotton 's mighty hard to beat!

You 'll fin' it on de paper, what de offers is dat 's made;
Dey 's all de same seditions,—half in cash, half in trade.
Dey 's mighty low, sah; come, now, can't you 'prove upon de rates
Dat Barrot Brothers offers—only twelb an' seben-eights?

Lord, Mahsr Johnny, raise it! Don't you know dat I 's a frien',

"What! de cotton ain't de same"

An' when I has de money I is willin' fur to *spen'?*
My custom 's wuff a heap, sah; jes you buy de
bale an' see.

Dere did n't nebber nobody lose nuffin off ob me.
Now, what 's de use ob gwine dere an' a-zaminin'
ob de bale?
When people trades wid me dey alluz gits an
hones' sale;
I ain't no han' fur cheatin'; I beliebes in actin'
fa'r,
An' ebry-body 'll tell you dey alluz foun' me
squar'.

I is n't like *some* niggers; I declar' it is a shame
De way some ob dem swin'les—What! de cotton
ain't de same
As dat 's in de sample! Well, I 'm blest, sah, ef
it is!

BUSINESS IN MISSISSIPPI

Dis heah must be my *brudder's* sample—Yes, sah,
dis is his.

If dat don't beat creation! Heah I 've done been
totin' 'round
A sample different from de cotton! I—will—be
—consound!
Mahsr Johnny, you must 'scuse me. Take de
cotton as it stan's,
An' tell me ef you 're willin' fur to take it off my
han's.

Sho! nebber min' de auger! 'tain't a bit o' use to
bore;
De bale is all de same 's dis heah place de baggin 's
tore;
You ought n't to go pullin' out de cotton dat a-
way;
It spiles de beauty ob de—What, sah! *rocks* in dar,
you say!

BUSINESS IN MISSISSIPPI

Rocks in dat ar cotton! How de debbil kin dat be?

I packed dat bale myse'f—hol' on a minute, le'—me—see—

My stars! I mus' be crazy! Mahsr Johnny, dis is fine!

I 's gone an' hauled my brudder's cotton in, instead ob mine!

SELLING A DOG

H'YAR, Pot-liquor! What you at? You heah me callin' you?

H'yar, sah! Come an' tell dis little gemmen howdy-do!

Dar, sah, *ain't* dat puppy jes as fat as he kin roll?

Maybe you won't b'liebe it, but he 's only six mon's ol'!

'Coon dog? Lord! young marster, he 's jes at 'em all de while;

I b'liebe dat he kin smell a 'coon fur half-a-mile.

I don' like to sell him, fur he 's wuf his weight in gol';

If *you* did n't want him, sah, he nebber *should* be sol'.

If you takes him off wid you, I 'll feel like I wuz lost.

SELLING A DOG

He 's de bes' young fightin'-dog I ebber come acrost.
Jes look at dem eyes, young marster; what a sab-bage face!
He won't let no stranger nigger come about de place.

You know Henry Wilson's Bob, dat whipped your fader's Dan?
Pot-liquor jes chucked dat dog so bad he could n't stan'!
Well, sah, if you wants him, now I 'll tell you what I 'll do,—
You kin hab him fur a dollar, seein's how it 's *you*.

Now, Marster Will, you *knows* it—he 's wuf mo'n dat, a heap;
R'al'y, I 's a-doin' wrong to let him go so cheap.
Don't you tell nobody, now, what wuz de price you paid—

SELLING A DOG

My ol' 'oman 's gwine to gib me fits, sah, I 's
afraid!

T'anks you, sah! Good-mornin', sah! You tell
yo' ma, fur me,
I has got de fines' turkeys dat she ebber see;
Dey is jes as good as any pusson ebber eat.
If she wants a *gobbler*, let her sen' to Uncle Pete.

Dar! I 's done got rid of dat ar wretched dog
at las'!
Drownin' time wuz comin' fur him mighty pre-
cious fas'!
Sol' him fur a dollar—well! An' goodness
knows de pup
Is n't wuf de powder it 'd take to blow him up!

UNCLE NICK ON FISHING

IT alluz sets me laughin', when I happens to be roun',
To see a lot ob gemmen come a-fishin' from de town!
Dey waits tell arter bre'kfus' 'fore dey ebber makes a start,
An' den you sees 'em comin' in a leetle Jarsey kyart.

Now, Jarsey kyarts is springy—so, to hab a studdy seat,
De gemmen 's 'bliged to ballus her wid suffin good to eat;
An' Jarsey kyarts runs better—so de gemmen seems to think—
By totin' 'long a demijohn of suffin good to drink.

UNCLE NICK ON FISHING

When dey gits at de fishin' place, it 's 'stonishin' indeed—
Sech tricks to go a-fishin' wid nobody nebber seed!
Dey poles is put togedder wid a dozen j'ints ob tin,
An' has a block-an'-tickle fur to wind de fishes in!

De gemmens makes a heap o' fuss, an' skeers de fishes off;
An' den dey takes an' sots de poles, some place de bank is sof';
An' den dey hunts a shady place, an' settles on de grass,
An' pruzently you heahs 'em: "Dat a spade? I has to pass!"

St. Petah wuz a fisherman, an' understood his trade;
He staid an' watched his cork, instid ob laz'in' in de shade.

UNCLE NICK ON FISHING

De gemmen is copyin' arter him—dey better be!
Or—*I 's* a science fisherman—'t 'u'd do to copy
me.

When I starts out a-fishin', I puts on my ol'est
clo'es—
Dey age is putty tol'able, you 'd nat'rally sup-
pose!
I gits up in de mohnin', long afore de sun has riz,
An' grabbles wums, *I* tell you!—like the yurly
bird I is.

I 's alluz berry 'tic'lar 'bout de season ob de moon:
De dark ob it is fishin' time—an' time for huntin'
'coon;
An' I 's be'n fishin' nuff to know, as notus mus'
be tuk
Ob vari's leetle sarcumstances bearin' on de luck:

UNCLE NICK ON FISHING

You has to spit upon de bait, afore you draps
it in;
Mus' keep yo' cork a-bobbin',—des as easy as you
kin;

"You mus' keep yo' cork a-bobbin'"

Ef some one steps acrost yo' pole, yo' luck is
shorely broke,
Widout dey steps it back ag'in, afore a word is
spoke.

Untel you quits a-fishin', don't you nebber count
yo' string;

UNCLE NICK ON FISHING

Fur ef you do, you 's sartin not to cotch anoder thing;
But ef a sarpent-doctor bug sh'u'd 'light upon de pole,
You knows you 's good fur cotchin' all de fishes in de hole.

Dar, now! you 's got de l'arnin' what a fisherman sh'u'd know;
So, when you 's ready, all you has to do 's to up an' go,
An' foller dem instruckshums—ef you does it, to de notch,
Good Marster! won't it s'prise de folks to see de mess you cotch!

NORVERN PEOPLE

DEM folks in de Norf is de beatin'est lot!
Wid all de brass buttons an' fixin's dey got—
You need n't tole me!—dey all dresses in blue:
I seed 'em de time 'at Grant's army come froo.

Dey libs up de country, whar ellyphunts grows,
Somewhar 'bout de head ob de ribber, I s'pose;
Whar snow keeps a-drappin', spring, winter, an' fall,
An' summer-time don't nebber get dar at all.

Up dar in dey town dar 's a mighty great hole
Dey dug fur to git at de silber and gol':
I reckon heah lately it mus' ha' cabed in—
I wish I c'u'd see a good two-bits ag'in!

NORVERN PEOPLE

Dey puts up supplies for us Christuns to eat,—
De whiskey, de flouah, de meal, an' de meat;
Dey 's dreffle big-feelin', an' makes a great fuss,
But dey can't git along widout wukin' for us.

I would n't be dem, not fur all you c'u'd gib:
Dey nebber tas'e 'possum as long as dey lib!
Dey w'u'd n't know gumbo, ef put in dey mouf—
Why don't dey all sell out an' come to de Souf?

But lawsy! dey 's ign'ant as ign'ant kin be,
An' ain't got de presence ob min' fur to see
Dat ol' Marsissippi 's jes ober de fence
Dat runs aroun' hebben's sarcumferymence!

Now, us dat is fabored wid de wisdom an' grace,
An' had de fus' pick fur a 'sirable place,
We ought fur to 'member de duty we owes,
To sheer wid our brudders as fur as it goes.

So sometime in chu'ch I 's a-gwine to serjes
Dat some-un be sent what kin talk to 'em bes'—
(An' mebbe dat 's *me*) fur to open deir eyes,
Recomstruc de pore critters, an' help 'em to rise.

We 'll fotch 'em down heah, de las' one ob de batch,
An' treat 'em like gemmen, an' rent 'em a patch—
Why, dat 's de Merlennium! Dat 's what it am;
An' us is de lion, an' dey is de lamb!

WHEREFORE HE PRAYS THAT A WARRANT MAY ISSUE

IS you de jestis ob de peace? I has a little case
About a little matter, sah, what happened on de place,
I 's nuffin but a nigger, but has feelin's, all de same,
An' de way dat Mahsr Henry went an' done me wuz a shame.

Las' spring I foun' a little chicken runnin' in de road;
I tuk it to de quarters, an' kep' it till it growed.
I nebber stole it; kase de law sez ebrythin' you fin'
Belongs to you; an' so, ob co'se, dat chicken, he wuz mine.

"Las' spring I foun' a little chicken runnin' in de road"

WHEREFORE HE PRAYS

A week dis comin' Thu'sday, I was comin' from de fiel',
An' happened fur to 'member I wuz out ob meat an' meal;
So I begins to study 'bout what I 's a-gwine to do—
An' thinks, sez I, "Dat chicken 's shorely big enough to stew."

When I gits to de quarters, den I sez unto my wife,—
I would n't tell a lie to you, sah, not to sabe my life,—
"Hey, Phyllis, gal," sez I, des so, "run out dar in de lot,
An' cotch dat Dominica fur to bile him in de pot."

Sez she to me, "I 'low myse'f, he *would* eat tol'ble good;
But how I gwine to cook him, when I is n't got no wood?"

WHEREFORE HE PRAYS

Dat wuz de conbersatiorm, sah; I gibe it word fur word,
An' Phyllis she can testify as dat wuz what occurred.

Sez I, "You kill de chicken. Does you think I 's los' my sense?"
An' I went to Mahsr's wood-pile, in de corner ob de fence.
I looked an' did n't see nobody, heard nobody speak,
An' so I toted off enough to do me fur a week.

I nebber thought ob stealin' when I tuk dat wood away,
For ebry stick I 'spected to return some oder day;
An' ef a man cain't borry wood what 's layin' out ob nights,
I 'd like fur you to tell me what 's the good ob *swivel rights?*

"An' me an' Phyllis had important bizness at de doah"

Well! Phyllis picked de chicken, an' she soused
him in de pot;
De fire wuz burnin' an' de water gittin' hot;
When somefin went boo-room! boo-room! right in
de chimney-place,
An' all de fire an' ashes come a-scootin' in my
face.

I thought it was de debbil, an' it skeered me 'mos'
to deff;
De smoke puffed out so hebby I could skacely
draw my breff;
De wood, de pot, de chicken, dey went flyin' crost
de floah,
An' me an' Phyllis had important bizness at de
doah.

De folks dey come a-runnin'; dar wuz Bob an'
Pete an' Bill;
An' heah come Mahsr Henry des a-laughin' fit
to kill—

Sez he, "I knowed, you rascal, you wuz takin' wood away,
An' I put a poun' o' powder in a holler stick to-day."

Dat 's why I want a warrant, sah; my rights is all I ax,
An' I has lots o' witnesses to summons to de fac's.
I scorns to be imposed on; an' I 'peals unto de law
To go fur Mahsr Henry, sah, an' bring him up to taw.

"Yoah Honah, an' de jury"

THE MISSISSIPPI WITNESS

YOAH HONAH, AN' DE JURY: Ef you 'll
listen, now, to me,
I 's gwine to straighten up dis case jes like it
ought to be.
Dis heah 's a case ob stealin' hogs—a mighty
ser'ous 'fense—
An' you 'll know all about it, when I gibs my
ebbydence.

Dis Peter Jones, de plainter, is a member ob de
chu'ch,
But Thomas Green, de fender, goodness knows
he 's nuffin much;
A lazy, triflin' nigger is dat berry Thomas
Green—
Dese is de dif'rent parties you is called to jedge
atween.

THE MISSISSIPPI WITNESS

Now gib me stric' contention while I 'lucidates de fac';
Dere 's two whole sides to eberyt'ing,—de front one an' de back,—
What 's dat de little lawyer say? To talk about de case?
Dat 's jes what I wuz comin' to; you makes me lose de place.

Whar wuz I? Oh! I 'members; I wuz jes about to say,
I heered a disputation 'bout a p'int of law to-day;
'Bout how to turn State's ebbydence—dat 's what dey 's dribin' at—
Now ain't it strange some niggers is so ignorant as dat?

Why, when you wants to turn it, you jes has to come to town,

An' find de Deestric Turner—he 'll be somewhar
loafin' 'roun'—
An' den sez you, "Mahsr Turner, sah, I zires my
compliments;
I 's come in town to see you, fur to turn State's
ebbydence."

As soon 's you tells him dat, he knows perzackly
what you mean,
An' takes you to his office, whar he 's got a big
mersheen,
An' dar you cotches hol' de crank, an' den you
turns away,
Untel at las' dar 's somefin clicks, an' den you 's
come to A.

"Is dat der letter of de thing de feller done?" sez
he;
Ef you sez no, you turns ag'in untel you comes
to B;

An' so you keep a-turnin', tell de right one gits aroun',
An' dar de Deestric Turner looks, an' dar de law is foun'.

An' den you gibs de fac's, an' den he reads the law to you,
An' axes you to 'vise him what you t'ink he ought to do;
An' den he say "good-mornin'," an' he gibs you fifty cents,
An' dat 's de way you has to do to turn State's ebbydence.

Well, gemmen ob de jury, dis heah case is understood.
I does n't *know* de hog wuz stole, but Peter's word is good.
He up an' sesso manfully, dout makin' any bones;
An' darfore, sahs, ef I wuz you, I t'ink I 'd 'cide for Jones.

BLIND NED

WHO is dat ar a-playin'? Shucks! I wish
I wuz n't blin';
But when de Lord he tuk my eyes, he lef' my
yeahs behin'.
Is dat you, Mahsr Bob? I t'ought I reco'nized
your bowin';
I said I knowed 't was you, soon 's I heered de
fiddle goin'.

Sho! dat ain't right! jes le' me show you how to
play dat tune;
I feel like I could make de fiddle talk dis arter-
noon.
Now don't you see that counter 's jes a leetle bit
too high?
Well, nebber min'; I guess you 'll learn to tune
her by an' by.

BLIND NED

You 's jes like all musicianers dat learns to play
by note:
You ain't got music in you, so you has to hab it
wrote.
Now dat ain't science—why de debbil don't you
play by yeah?
For dat 's de onlies' kin' ob music fitten' fur to
heah.

Do you suppose, when David wuz a-pickin' on
de harp,
He ebber knowed de difference atwixt a flat an'
sharp?
But any tune you called fur, he could pick it all
de same,
For David knowed de music, dough he did n't
know de name.

Now what shall I begin on? Somefin lively, fas',
an' quick?

"Is dat you, Mahsr Bob?"

Well, sah, jes pay attention, an' I 'll gib you "Cap'n Dick."
Yah! yah! young mahsr, don't you feel jes like you want to pat?
You 'll hab to practice fur a while afore you ekals dat!

Dere ain't nobody 'roun' *dis* place kin play wid Uncle Ned;
Dey is n't got it in dere fingers, neider in deir head;
Dat fiddler Bill dey talks about—I heered him play a piece,
An' I declar' it sounded like a fox among de geese.

A violeen is like an 'ooman, mighty hard to guide,
An' mighty hard to keep in order arter once it 's buyed.
Dere 's alluz somefin 'bout it out of kelter, more or less,

An' tain't de fancies'-lookin' ones dat allus does de bes'.

Dis yer 's a splendid inst'ument—I 'spec' it cost a heap;
You r'al'y ought to let me hab dis fiddle fur to keep.
It ain't no use to you, sah; fur, widout it 's in de man,
He cain't git music out de fines' fiddle in de lan'.

It 'quires a power ob science fur to fiddle, sah, you see,
An' science comes by natur'; dat 's de way it is wid me.
But Lord! dat Bill! It 'muses me to heah him talkin' big;
You never heered a braggin' fiddler play a decent jig!

Dat Bill, he is a caution, sah! I wonder now whar he

Dat Bill

An' oder folks I knows of—yes, I wonder whar 'll dey be
In hebben, when de music's playin', an' de angels shout—
If Bill should jine de chorus, dey would hab to put him out.

Well, good-by, Mahsr Bob, sah; when you 's nuffin else to do
Jes sen' fur dis ol' darky, an' he 'll come an' play fur you;
An' don't gib up your practisin'—you 's only sebenteen,
An' maybe when you 's ol' as me you 'll play the violeen.

MAHSR JOHN

I HEAHS a heap o' people talkin', ebrywhar I goes,
'Bout Washintum an' Franklum, an' sech gen'uses as dose;
I s'pose dey 's mighty fine, but heah 's de p'int I 's bettin' on:
Dere wuz n't nar a one ob 'em come up to Mahsr John.

He shorely wuz de greates' man de country ebber growed.
You better had git out de way when *he* come 'long de road!
He hel' his head up dis way, like he 'spised to see de groun';
An' niggers had to toe de mark when Mahsr John wuz roun'.

I only has to shet my eyes, an' den it seems to me
I sees him right afore me now, jes like he use' to be,
A-settin' on de gal'ry, lookin' awful big an' wise,
Wid little niggers fannin' him to keep away de flies.

He alluz wore de berry bes' ob planters' linen suits,
An' kep' a nigger busy jes a-blackin' ob his boots;
De buckles on his galluses wuz made of solid gol',
An' diamon's!—dey wuz in his shut as thick as it would hol'.

You heered me! 't was a caution, when he went to take a ride,
To see him in de kerridge, wid ol' Mistis by his side—
Mulatter Bill a-dribin', an' a nigger on behin',
An' two Kaintucky hosses tuk 'em tearin' whar dey gwine.

Mulatter Bill a-dribin'

MAHSR JOHN

Ol' Mahsr John wuz pow'ful rich—he owned a heap o' lan':
Fibe cotton places, 'sides a sugar place in Loozyan';
He had a thousan' niggers—an' he wuked 'em, shore 's you born!
De oberseahs 'u'd start 'em at de breakin' ob de morn.

I reckon dere wuz forty ob de niggers, young an' ol',
Dat staid about de big house jes to do what dey wuz tol';
Dey had a' easy time, wid skacely any work at all—
But dey had to come a-runnin' when ol' Mahsr John 'u'd call!

Sometimes he 'd gib a frolic—dat 's de time you seed de fun:

De 'ristocratic fam'lies, dey 'u'd be dar, ebry one;
Dey 'd hab a band from New Orleans to play
for 'em to dance,
An' tell you what, de *supper* wuz a '*tic'lar* sar-
cumstance.

Well, times is changed. De war it come an' sot
de niggers free,
An' now ol' Mahsr John ain't hardly wuf as much
as me;
He had to pay his debts, an' so his lan' is mos'ly
gone—
An' I declar' I 's sorry for my pore ol' Mahsr
John.

But when I heahs 'em talkin' 'bout some sully-
brated man,
I listens to 'em quiet, till dey done said all dey
can,

An' den I 'lows dot in dem days 'at I remembers on,
Dat gemman war n't a patchin' onto my ol' Mahsr John!

PRECEPTS AT PARTING

WELL, son, so you 's gwine for to leab us,
yo' lubbin' ol' mammy an' me,
An' set yo'se'f up as a waiter, aboa'd ob de *Robbut E. Lee*,
Along wid dem fancy young niggers, what 's 'shamed fur to look at a hoe,
An' acts like a passel ob rich folks, when dey is n't got nuffin to show.

You 's had better trainin' dan dey has—I hopes 'at you 'll zibit more sense;
Sech niggers is like a young rooster, a-settin' up top ob a fence:
He keeps on a-stretchin' an' crowin', an', while he 's a-blowin' his horn,
Dem chickens what ain't arter fussin' is pickin' up all ob de corn.

PRECEPTS AT PARTING

Now listen, an' min' what I tell you, an' don't you forgit what I say;

Take advice ob a 'sperienced pussen, an' you 'll git up de ladder an' stay:

Who knows? You mought git to be Pres'dent, or jestice, perhaps, ob de peace—

De man what keeps pullin' de grape-vine shakes down a few bunches at leas.'

A-stretchin' an' crowin'

Dem niggers what runs on de ribber is mos'ly a mighty sharp set;

Dey 'd find out some way fur to beat you, ef you bet 'em de water wuz wet;

You 's got to watch out for dem fellers; dey 'd cheat off de horns ob a cow.

I knows 'em; I follered de ribber 'fore ebber I follered a plow.

PRECEPTS AT PARTING

You 'll easy git 'long wid de white folks,—de
Cappen an' steward an' clerks,—
Dey won't say a word to a nigger, as long as dey
notice he works;
An' work is de onlies' ingine we 's any 'casion to
tote,
To keep us gwine on troo de currents dat pesters
de spirichul boat.

I heered dat idee from a preacher; he 'lowed 'at
dis life wuz a stream,
An' ebry one's soul wuz a packet dat run wid a
full head ob steam;
Dat some ob 'em 's only stern-wheelers, while
oders wuz mons'ously fine—
An' de trip wuz made safes' an' quickes' by boats
ob de Mefodis line.

I wants you, my son, to be 'tic'lar, an' 'sociate
only wid dey

Dat 's 'titled to go in de cabin—don't neber hab nuffin to say

"But nebber git airy"

To dem low-minded roustabout niggers what han'les de cotton below—

Dem common brack rascals ain't fittin' for no cabin-waiter to know.

PRECEPTS AT PARTING

But nebber git airy: be 'spectful to all de white
people you see;
An' nebber go back on de raisin' you 's had from
your mammy an' me.
It 's hard on your mudder, your leabin'—I don'
know whatebber she 'll do;
An' shorely your fadder 'll miss you—I 'll alluz
be thinkin' ob you.

Well, now I 's done tol' you my say-so. Dar ain't
nuffin more as I knows—
'Cept dis: don't you nebber come back, sah,
widout you has money an' clo'es.
I 's kep' you as long as I 's gwine to, an' now
you an' me we is done—
An' calves is too skace in dis country to kill fur
a prodigal son.

HALF-WAY DOIN'S

BELUBBED fellah-trabelers:—In holdin' forth to-day,
I does n't quote no special verse fur whut I has to say;
De sermon will be berry short, an' dis here am de tex':
Dat half-way doin's ain't no 'count fur dis worl' or de nex'.

Dis worl' dat we 's a-libbin' in is like a cotton-row,
Whar ebery cullud gentleman has got his line to hoe;
An' ebery time a lazy nigger stops to take a nap,
De grass keeps on a-growin' fur to smudder up his crap.

HALF-WAY DOIN'S

When Moses led de Jews acrost de waters ob de sea,
Dey had to keep a-goin' jes as fas' as fas' could be;
Do you s'pose dat dey could ebber hab succeeded in deir wish,
An' reached de Promised Lan' at las'—if dey had stopped to fish?

My frien's, dar wuz a garden once, whar Adam libbed wid Eve,
Wid no one 'roun' to bodder dem, no neighbors fur to thieve;
An' ebery day wuz Christmus, an' dey got deir rations free,
An' eberyt'ing belong to dem except an apple-tree.

You all know 'bout de story—how de snake come snoopin' 'roun',—

HALF-WAY DOIN'S

A stump-tail rusty moccasin, a-crawlin' on de groun',—
How Eve an' Adam ate de fruit an' went an' hid deir face,
Till de angel oberseer, he come an' drove 'em off de place.

Now, s'pose dat man an' 'ooman had n't 'tempted fur to shirk,
But had gone about deir gardenin', an' 'tended to deir work,
Dey would n't hab been loafin' whar dey had no business to,
An' de debbil nebber 'd got a chance to tell 'em whut to do.

No half-way doin's, bredren! It 'll nebber do, I say!
Go at your task an' finish it, an' den 's de time to play;

HALF-WAY DOIN'S

Fur eben if de crap is good, de rain 'll spile the bolls,
Unless you keeps a-pickin' in de garden ob yo' souls.

Keep a-plowin', an' a-hoein', an' a-scrapin' ob de rows,
An' when de ginnin 's ober you can pay up whut you owes;
But if you quits a-workin' ebery time de sun is hot,

"Keep a-hoein' an' a-scrapin'"

HALF-WAY DOIN'S

De sheriff 's gwine to lebby upon eberyt'ing you 's got.

Whuteber 'tis you 's dribin' at, be shore an' dribe it through,
An' don't let nuffin stop you, but do whut you 's gwine to do;
Fur when you sees a nigger foolin', den, as shore 's you 're born,
You 's gwine to see him comin' out de small eend ob de horn.

I thanks you for de 'tention you has gib dis aft-ernoon—
Sister Williams will oblige us by a-raisin' ob a tune—
I see dat Brudder Johnson 's 'bout to pass aroun' de hat,
An' don't let 's hab no half-way doin's when it comes to dat!

A SERMON FOR THE SISTERS

I NEBBER breaks a colt afore he 's old enough
to trabbel;
I nebber digs my taters tell dey plenty big to
grabble.
An' when you sees me risin' up to structify in
meetin',
I 's fust clumb up de knowledge-tree an' done
some apple-eatin'.

I sees some sistahs pruzint, mighty proud o' whut
dey wearin':
It 's well you is n't apples, now, you better be
declarin'!
Fur when ye heerd yo' market-price, 't 'd hurt
yo' little feelin's:
You would n't fotch a dime a peck, fur all yo'
fancy peelin's.

A SERMON FOR THE SISTERS

O sistahs!—leetle apples (fur you 're r'ally mighty like 'em)—
I lubs de ol'-time russets, dough it 's suldom I kin strike 'em;
An' so I lubs you, sistahs, fur yo' grace, an' not yo' graces—
I don't keer how my apple looks, but on'y how it tas'es.

Is dey a Sabbaf-scholah heah? Den let him 'form his mudder
How Jacob-in-de-Bible's boys played off upon dey brudder!
Dey sol' him to a trader—an' at las' he struck de prison;
Dat comed ob Joseph's struttin' in dat streaked coat ob his 'n.

My Christian frien's, dis story proobs dat eben men is human—

"I 's fust clumb up de knowledge-tree"

A SERMON FOR THE SISTERS

He 'd had a dozen fancy coats, ef he 'd 'a' been
a 'ooman!
De cussidness ob showin' off, he foun' out all
about it;
An' yit he wuz a Christian man, as good as ever
shouted.

It l'arned him! An' I bet you when he come to
git his riches
Dey did n't go fur stylish coats or Philadelphy
breeches;
He did n't was'e his money when experunce taught
him better,
But went aroun' a-lookin' like he 's waitin' fur a
letter!

Now, sistahs, won't you copy him? Say, won't
you take a lesson,
An' min' dis sollum wahnin' 'bout de sin ob fancy
dressin'?

A SERMON FOR THE SISTERS

How much you spen' upon yo'self! I wish you might remember
Yo' preacher ain't been paid a cent sense somewhar in November.

I better close. I sees some gals dis sahmon 's kinder hittin'
A-whisperin', an' 'sturbin' all dat 's near whar dey 's a-sittin';
To look at dem, an' listen at dey onrespec'ful jabber,
It turns de milk ob human kin'ness mighty nigh to clabber!

A-A-A-MEN!

UNCLE CAP INTERVIEWED

GOOD-MORNIN', Mahsr—thank you, sah;
I 's tol'able myself,
Considerin' dat it 's almos' time I 's laid upon de shelf;
De onlies' t'ing dat bodders much is right aroun' in here,
Dis mis'ry in my back dat won't recease to persevere.

An' so you come to see me, sah, beca'se you hab been tol'
Dat I 's de oldes' man about? Yes, I is mighty ol'!
A hundred an' eleben years dis comin' Christmas-day-
I could n't tell ezzackly, but dat 's whut people say.

UNCLE CAP INTERVIEWED

When *I* come to dis country fust dar wa'n't no
houses 'roun',
An' me an' my ole mahsr had to camp out on de
groun';
De fust house dat was 'rected, sah, I helped in
raisin' it—
Sometimes I tries to 'member whar it sot, but I
forgit.

You Liza! ain't you nebber gwine to set dat pot
to bile!
Niggers nebber was so lazy when your fader was
a chile.
Dat ar 's my youngest daughter, sah, a-washin' ob
de greens;
She was born de year dat Jackson fit de battle ob
Orleans.

Dey ain't wuf shucks, dese young folks dat 's a-
growin' up now'days;

UNCLE CAP INTERVIEWED

I nebber seed no niggers yit dat had such triflin' ways.

I b'lieve dis country 's gwine to smash—I knows, at any rate,

"Good-mornin', mahsr; I 's tol'able myself"

Dat t'ings ain't like dey used to wuz in ole Virginny State.

So you thought 't was Souf Ca'lina, sah, whar I was born an' raised?

UNCLE CAP INTERVIEWED

No! I 'm from ole Virginny, an' fur dat de Lord
be praised!
Virginny niggers always wuz de best dat you
could buy;
Poor white trash could n't git 'em, 'ca'se de prices
wuz so high.

Yes, sah, I 's from Virginny, an' I reckon dat you
mout
Have heerd of folks I knowed—dey 're often
talked about.
Dar 's Ginnle Washin'ton, fur one; he lived
acrost de road;
I s'pect you 've heerd of him, sah? He wuz one
ob dem I knowed.

He rode about de country on a big old dapple-
gray,
An' used to come an' dine with mahsr 'bout ebery
udder day;

UNCLE CAP INTERVIEWED

De fines'-lookin' gentleman dat I mos' eber seed—
He tried to buy me; but old mahsr told him, "No, indeed!"

Whut do I t'ink of freedom? I dunno; it 's true I 's free,
But now I 's got so awful old, whut good is 'at to me?
I nebber bodders 'bout it much—to tell the troof, my min'
Is tuk up now in t'inkin' 'bout de place whar I 's a-gwine.

De hymn says: "John de Baptis', he wuz nuffin but a Jew,
But de Holy Bible tells us dat he wuz a preacher too,"
An' if a 'ligious Jew can 'mong de chosen few advance,
Dere shorely ain't no question but a nigger 'll hab a chance.

UNCLE CAP INTERVIEWED

I done been had religion now fur gwine on sixty
year,
An' my troubles is 'mos' ober, fur de end is
drawin' near;
An' I know dat when I mount de skies de Lord
will make ob me
A young an' likely nigger, sah, jus' like I use'
to be.

THE OLD HOSTLER'S EXPERIENCE

I GITS up heah—like good ol' Paul,
Obed'ent to de Mahsr's call—
To tell my sperunce, tell it all!
Ol' SHAME 's put up;
An' I 's led GLORY out de stall,
To win de cup.

Den, all you sinnahs, cl'ar de track!
I 's mounted on ol' GLORY's back;
Her hufs is gwine ta-click-ta-clack,—
Dat 's how dey 's gwine!
An' Satan's rattlin', shacklin' hack
Is lef' behin'.

Ah, Christuns, in my foolish days
I rid de debbil's blooded bays,

THE OLD HOSTLER'S EXPERIENCE

Persumpchus Pride, an' Worl'ly Ways,
An' made 'em lope;
But now I 's turned 'em out to graze
Widout a rope.

Yah! Yah! *Oh!* how I used to—Well,
De 'tic'lars 'tain't no use to tell,
But oncet I rid de road to hell
Wid nar a bit,
An' went two-forty on the shell
Toward de pit.

Like Balaam, when he rid de ass,
I 'sisted on a-trablin' fas';
But 't wuz a pace 'at c'u'd n't las',
An' I got th'owed.
I cotch Religion, trottin' pas',
An' back I goed.

An' now I simply 'vises you,
You deblish boys I 's talkin' to,

"An' now I simply 'vises you"

THE OLD HOSTLER'S EXPERIENCE

Don't nebber hab a thing to do
  Wid Satan's hosses;
Dey 'll buck an' fling you in de sloo,
  Fus one you crosses.

But git RELIGION well in han',
An' ride her like a little man—
Dere ain't no hoss in all de lan'
  Kin run agin her—
An' you 'll come by de jedges' stan'
  A' easy winner.

REV. HENRY'S WAR-SONG

WHO 'S gwine to fight in de battle, in de battle?
Who 's gwine to march wid de army ob de King?
Listen at de drums, how dey rattle, rattle, rattle:
Hark to de bullets, how dey sing!
Close up, saints, in de center!
Fall in, sinnahs, on de flanks!
'Tention! right dress! eyes front! steady!—
All stand quiet in de ranks.

Dat 's right, men keep a-standin', keep a-standin'—
Not a bit o' danger ob an inimy behin':
De ahmy 's at de front, an' ouah Gineral Commandin'
Has got out a pow'ful pickit-line!
Wait for yo' orders till dey come, den;

REV. HENRY'S WAR-SONG

Keep up patience; rendah thanks
Dat you has nuffin fur to do—onless it 's suffin
To stan' up waitin' in de ranks.

'T won't be so long 'fore de orders, 'fore de orders—
Soon we 'll be gittin' 'em—de orders to advance;
Den, ebry man in de column to his duty;
Show what 's de value ob de chance!
Fight! an' we 'll oberturn de debbil!
Fight! an' we 'll hab de country's thanks!
An' all 'll git a pension an' a' honorable mention,
What stood up steady in de ranks!

LARRY 'S ON THE FORCE

WELL, Katie, and this is yersilf? And where was you this whoile?
And ain't ye dhrissed! You are the wan to illusthrate the stoile;
But niver moind thim matthers now, there 's toime enough for thim;
And Larry—that 's me b'y—I want to sphake to you av him.

Sure, Larry bates thim all for luck!—'t is he will make his way,
And be the proide and honnur to the sod beyant the say.
We 'll soon be able—whisht! I do be singin' till I 'm hoorse,
For iver since a month or more, me Larry 's on the foorce!

"And ain't ye dhrissed!"

LARRY 'S ON THE FORCE

There 's not a proivate gintlemen that boords in all the row
Who houlds himself loike Larry does, or makes as foine a show:
Thim eyes av his, the way they shoine—his coat, and butthons too—
He bates them kerrige dhroivers that be on the avenue!

He shtips that proud and shtately-loike, you 'd think he owned the town,
And houlds his shtick convanient to be tappin' some wan down.
Aich blissed day I watch to see him comin' up the shtrate,
For, by the greatest bit av luck, our house is on his bate.

The little b'ys is feared av him, for Larry 's moighty shtrict,

And many 's the litthle blagyard he 's arristed, I expict;
The beggyars gits acrass the shtrate—you ought to see thim fly!—
And organ-groinders scatthers whin they see him comin' by.

I know that Larry 's bound to roise; he 'll get a sergeant's post
And afther that a captincy widhin a year at most;
And av he goes in politics he has the head to throive—
I 'll be an Aldherwoman, Kate, afore I 'm thirty-foive!

What 's that again? Y 'are jokin', surely—Katie!—*is* it thrue?
Last noight, you say, *he—married?* and Aileen O'Donahue?

"He houlds his shtick convanient to be tappin' some wan down"

LARRY 'S ON THE FORCE

O Larry! c'u'd ye have the hairt—but let the
spalpeen be:
Av he demanes himsilf to *her*, he 's nothing more
to me.

The ugly shcamp! I always said, just as I 'm
tellin' you,
That Larry was the biggest fool av all I iver
knew;
And many a toime I 've tould mesilf—*you* see it
now, av coorse—
He 'd niver come to anny good av he got on the
foorce!

THE IRISH ECLIPSE

IN Watherford, wanst, lived Profissorr Mac-
Shane,
The foinest asthronomer iver was sane;
For long before noight, wid the scoience he knew,
Wheriver wan shtar was, sure he could see two
Quoite plain,
Could Profissorr MacShane.

More power to him! ivry claare noight as would
pass,
He 'd sit by the windy, a-shoving his glass;
A poke at the dipper, that plaised him the laist,
But a punch in the milky way suited his taste,—
Small blame
To his sowl for that same!

THE IRISH ECLIPSE

Now, wan toime in Watherford, not long ago,
They had what the loike was not haard of, I know,
Since Erin was undher ould Brian Borrhoime:
The sun was ayclipsed for three days at wan toime!

It 's thrue
As I tell it to you.

'T was sunroise long gone, yet the sun never rose,
And ivry one axed, "What 's the matther, God knows?"
The next day, and next, was the very same way;
The noight was so long it was lasting all day,

As black
As the coat on yer back.

The paiple wint hunting Profissorr MacShane,
To thry if he 'd know what this wondher could mane.
He answered thim back: "Is that so? Are ye there?

THE IRISH ECLIPSE

'T is a lot of most iligant gommachs ye air,
To ax
For the plainest of facts!

"Ye 're part of an impoire, yez must n't forget,
Upon which the sun 's niver able to set;
Thin why will it give yer impoire a surproise
If wanst, for a change, he refuses to roise?"
Siz he,
"That is aizy to see!"

A PRACTICAL YOUNG WOMAN

YOUNG Julius Jones loved Susan
Slade;
And oft, in dulcet tones,
He vainly had besought the maid
To take the name of Jones.

"Wert thou but solid, then, be sure,
'T would be all right," said she,
"But Mr. J., whilst thou art poor
Pray think no more of me."

Poor Jones was sad; his coat was bad;
His salary was worse;
But hope suggested: "Jones, my lad,
Just try the power of verse."

A PRACTICAL YOUNG WOMAN

He sat him down and wrote in rhyme
How she was in her spring,

He sat him down and wrote in rhyme

And he in summer's golden prime—
And all that sort of thing.

The poem praised her hair and eyes,
Her lips, with honey laden.
He wound it up—up in the skies—
And mailed it to the maiden.

A PRACTICAL YOUNG WOMAN

She read it over, kept it clean,
  Put on her finest raiment,
And took it to a magazine
  And got ten dollars payment.

THE POLYPHONE

PROFESSOR Jones was very wise,
And wore green goggles on his eyes,—
Or, 't would be better, I suppose,
To say he wore 'em on his nose,—
And was so very tall and slim
The street-boys made a jest of him,
And to his garments would attach
The label: "Here 's a walking match."
Yet this ungainly friend of ours
Made daily gain in mental powers.
To him, each coming moment brought
Some thing of moment—fact or thought—
And he could bid the boys defiance
When rambling in the paths of science.

For many weeks Professor Jones
Made study of the law of tones.

THE POLYPHONE

Of phonographs and telephones
And megaphones he had a store
That filled up half his study floor.

Professor Jones

The number of his tools, indeed,
Would make a work too long to read
With any sort of satisfaction;

But magnets were the chief attraction.
With these he labored, much intent
On making a new instrument
Which should, by means of sound-vibrations,
Make both "transmissions" and translations.
Said he: "For speech, we must have tone,
And every language has its own,—
Our high-toned English such-and-such,
And so-and-so the lowest Dutch,—
Its given rules to guide inflection
In some particular direction.
There 's philologic evidence
That our languages commence
In some lost parent tongue,—each root
Each nation modifies to suit,—
And languages, 't is clearly found,
In no way differ but in sound.
Now, diaphragms may well be trusted,
If once they 're properly adjusted
For language A and language B,
According to the phonic key

(And then connected in a circuit
By persons competent to work it),
To transpose these root-derivations
Which differ with the tones of nations.
So if one 'sends' an English sermon
'T will sound a sound discourse in German,
And our Italian learned at home
Can be well understood at Rome."

So saying, the Professor toiled,
And hammered, polished, filed, and oiled,
Until, adjusted and connected,
Behold the polyphones perfected!
One stood upon the study table,
And one was downstairs in the stable,
Where curious neighbors might not spy it,
And naught remained to do but try it.
A boy placed at the sending-station,

THE POLYPHONE

To speak (for a consideration)
The noble language of our nation,
Professor Jones hied up the stair
To listen to the sounds up there,
Which would at once, no doubt, determine
If English could be changed to German.

That boy below, sad to relate,
Was not in a regenerate state:
His language did not smack of schools,
Or go by proper laws and rules.
His speech was very shrill, but oh!
Its tone was most exceeding low!
So then and there the stable rang
With slang, and nothing else but slang,
Which, having no equivalent
In German, clogged the instrument,
And while the disappointed Jones
Stood quaking at the horrid tones
That came from the receiving plate,

THE POLYPHONE

Discordant, inarticulate,
The boy began the last new song—
There was a clang, as from a gong,
And shattered were the polyphones,
And eke the intellect of Jones!

THE FIRST CLIENT

A LEGAL DITTY TO BE SUNG WITHOUT CHORUS TO THE AIR OF "THE KING'S OLD COURTIER."

JOHN SMITH, a young attorney, just admitted to the bar,
Was solemn and sagacious—as young attorneys are;
And a frown of deep abstraction held the seizin of his face—
The result of contemplation of the rule in Shelley's Case.

One day in term-time Mr. Smith was sitting in the Court,
When some good men and true of the body of the county did on their oath report,

That heretofore, to wit: upon the second day of May,

A. D. 1877, about the hour of noon in the county and state aforesaid, one Joseph Scroggs, late of said county, did then and there feloniously take, steal, and carry away

One bay horse, of the value of fifty dollars, more or less

(The same then and there being of the property, goods, and chattels of one Hezekiah Hess),

Contrary to the statute in such case expressly made

And provided, and against the peace and dignity of the state wherein the venue had been laid.

The prisoner, Joseph Scroggs, was then arraigned upon this charge,

And plead not guilty, and of this he threw himself upon the country at large;

And said Joseph being poor, the Court did graciously appoint

Mr. Smith to defend him—much on the same principle that obtains in every charity hospital, where a young medical student is often set to rectify a serious injury to an organ or a joint.

The witnesses seemed prejudiced against poor Mr. Scroggs;

And the district attorney made a thrilling speech in which he told the jury if they did n't find for the state he reckoned he 'd have to "walk their logs."

Then Mr. Smith arose and made his speech for the defense,

Wherein he quoted Shakspere, Blackstone, Chitty, Archbold, Joaquin Miller, Story, Kent, Tupper, Smedes, and Marshall, and many other writers, and everybody said they "never heerd sich a bust of eloquence."

And he said: "On *this* hypothesis, my client must go free;"

And: "Again, on *this* hypothesis, it 's morally impossible that he could be guilty, don't you see?"

And: "Then, on *this* hypothesis, you really can't convict;"—

And so on, with forty-six more hypotheses, upon none of which, Mr. Smith ably demonstrated, could Scroggs be derelict.

But the jury, never stirring from the box wherein they sat,

Returned a verdict of "guilty"; and his honor straightway sentenced Scroggs to a three-year term in the penitentiary, and a heavy fine, and the costs on top of that;

And the prisoner, in wild delight, got up and danced and sung;

And when they asked him the reason of this strange behavior, he said: "It 's because I got off so easy—for if there 'd ha' been a few more of them darned *hypothesises*, I should certainly have been hung!"

THE KNIGHT AND THE SQUIRE

SIR MORTIMER EUSTACE FITZ CLARENCE DU BROWN
Sat drinking his ruby wine;
And he called: "What ho! Here—somebody go
And summon that squire of mine,
Young Patrick de Wachtamrhein."

They passed the word for young Patrick, who came
And entered the castle hall.
"Good master," said he, "and what now might it be
You 'd have me be doing, at all?
I 'll do it, whatever befall."

THE KNIGHT AND THE SQUIRE

"Now hie thee up to the palace, good squire,
And get thee speech with the King;
For fain would I know if this news be so
The palmers and peddlers bring—
Of a new crusade this spring."

Young Patrick rode forth and young Patrick rode back;
Sir Mortimer gave him go'd-den;
"Sir, war is declared, and a draft prepared,
For his Majesty must have men:
And gold has gone up to ten."

Then good Sir Mortimer straightway went
To his merchant-tailor man,
And bought for a groat a new tin coat,
Which, cut on the latest plan,
Looked stylish as any tin can.

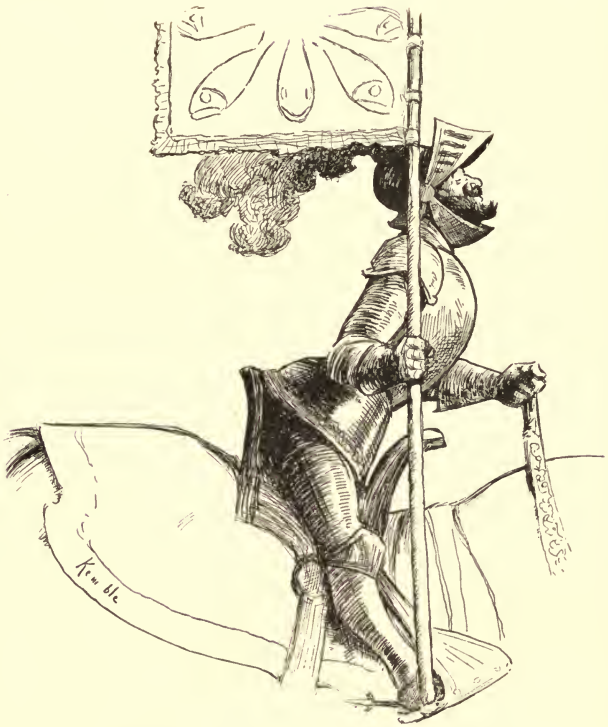
"I sell you dot pair brass pants so sheap—
No? Mebbe you comes again?

Puy a rubber shtamp for to use in camp
For to marg your clodings plain?"
But the merchant talked in vain.

"Come hither, now, Patrick de Wachtamrhein,"
Said the knight; "thou art bold and stanch;
No wight in the castle with thee can wrestle:
I leave thee in charge of the ranch—
Take care of my lady Blanche."

Sir Mortimer rode with his banner displayed,—
Six cod-fish saltier-wise,—
But he did not go to crusade—oh, no!
But in search of army supplies,
Expecting the market to rise.

Said he: "In the army I will not go,
And they cannot impress me;
'T were a vain attempt, for I am exempt,
As my age is fifty-three.
A contractor I will be."



Sir Mortimer rode with his banner displayed

So he rode abroad, and he found, with joy,
That his neighbors' sheep looked well,
And their oxen stout went straying about
So fat that they nearly fell;
And he drove them off to sell.

Young Patrick de Wachtamrhein heard these things,
And his eyes with tears grew dim;
"This castle should not," he observed, "God wot,
Belong to a chap like him,
For his moral sense is slim."

So he seized Sir Mortimer's wealth and wife
(Divorced by a chancery suit);
Of the house he was head in Sir Mortimer's stead,
And he sent off the latter, to boot,
To crusade as his substitute.

And, knights, moral ye all may learn
From the tale that is here rehearsed:
Before you start for a foreign part
'T is best to provide for the worst,
And mortgage your property first.

NINE GRAVES IN EDINBRO

IN the church-yard, up in the old high town,
The sexton stood at his daily toil,
And he lifted his mattock, and drove it down,
And sunk it deep in the sacred soil.

And then as he delved he sang right lustily,
Aye as he deepened and shaped the graves
In the black old mold that smelled so mustily,
And thus was the way of the sexton's staves:

"It 's nine o' the clock, and I have begun
The settled task that is daily mine;
By ten o' the clock I will finish one,
By six o' the clock there must be nine:

"Just three for women, and three for men,
And, to fill the number, another three

NINE GRAVES IN EDINBRO

For daughters of women and sons of men
  Who men or women shall never be.

"And the first of the graves in a row of three
  Is his or hers who shall first appear;
All lie in the order they come to me,
  And such has been ever the custom here."

The first they brought was a fair young child,
  And they saw him buried and went their way:
And the sexton leaned on his spade and smiled,
  And wondered, "How many more to-day?"

The next was a man; then a woman came:
  The sexton had loved her in years gone by;
But the years *had* gone, and the dead old dame
  He buried as deep in his memory.

At six o' the clock his task was done;
  Eight graves were closed, and the ninth prepared

Made ready to welcome a man—what one
'T was little the grim old sexton cared.

The sexton

He sat him down on its brink to rest,
When the clouds were red and the sky was gray,
And said to himself: "This last is the best
And deepest of all I have digged to-day.

NINE GRAVES IN EDINBRO

"Who will fill it, I wonder, and when?
It does not matter: who 'er they be,
The best and the worst of the race of men
Are all alike when they come to me."

They went to him with a man, next day,
When the sky was gray and the clouds were red,
As the sun set forth on his upward way;
They went—and they found the sexton dead.

Dead, by the open grave, was he;
And they buried him in it that self-same day,
And marveled much such a thing should be;
And since, the people will often say:

If ye dig, no matter when,
Graves to bury other men,
Think—it never can be known
When ye'll chance to dig your own.

NINE GRAVES IN EDINBRO

Mind ye of the tale ye know—
Nine graves in Edinbro.

NOTE.—The following is related concerning the death of Jemmy Camber, one of the jesters of King James I.

"Jemmy rose, made him ready, takes his horse, and rides to the church-yard in the high towne, where he found the sexton (as the custom is there) making nine graves—three for men, three for women, and three for children; and whoso dyes next, first come, first served. 'Lend me thy spade,' says Jemmy, and with that digs a hole, which hole hee bids him make for his grave; and doth give him a French crowne. The man, willing to please him (more for his gold than his pleasure), did so; and the foole gets upon his horse, rides to a gentleman of the towne, and on the sodaine within two houres after dyed; of whom the sexton telling, he was buried there indeed."—ROBERT ARNIM, "The Nest of Ninnies." (A. D. 1608.)

HOPE

NO matter where we sail,
A storm may come to wreck us,
A bitter wind, to check us
In the quest for unknown lands,
And cast us on the sands,
No matter where we sail:

Then, when my ship goes down,
What choice is left to me
From leaping in the sea—
And willingly forsake
All that the sea can take,
Then, when my ship goes down?

Still, in spite of storm,
From all we feel or fear

HOPE

A rescue may be near:
Though tempests blow their best,
A manly heart can rest
Still, in spite of storm!

STUDIES IN STYLE

BURNS.—*An Epistle to John Howard.*

DEAR SIR: I never saw your face
But yet, for some few moments' space,
To tak' a friend's familiar place
Is my design:
The friend o' a' the human race
Is surely mine.

Here is my han', sir; will ye tak' it?
An honest man may safely shake it,
For, 'spite o' Fate, nae powers shall mak' it
Be stained wi' crime—
May a' its little force forsake it
Afore that time!

'T is little that I hae to offer—
My humble muse expects you 'll scoff her,

And scarce she daurs to mak' the proffer,
It is sae sma':
My best guid-will: pray tak' it of her,
For that 's my a'.

I hae nae flatt'rin' words to gie you;
I only say, sir, God be wi' you!
And whan from life He wills to free you,
May you repair
To His ain house—I hope to see you
Whan I am there!

This warld, I hope you may improve it,
But yet I doubt the de'il could move it
Except in tracks already grovit—
Howe'er, if sae,
There is nae harm to *try* to shove it
Anither way.

The warld, they say, is gettin' auld;
Yet in her bosom, I 've been tauld,

A burnin', youthfu' heart 's installed—
I dinna ken,—
But sure her face seems freezin' cauld
To some puir men.

In summer though the sun may shine,
Aye still the winter's cauld is mine—
But what o' that? The manly pine
Endures the storm!
Ae spark o' Poesy divine
Will keep me warm.

But I am takin' up your time—
Worth sae much mair than my puir rhyme
That ye will hear sic verses chime
And no cry "hark!"—
Sae, wussin ye success sublime,
I mak' my mark.

HERRICK.—*A Preachment.*

O MAN! if hard thy fortune,
However fate importune,
Turn not to wrong—none find, or will,
Their good enlarged by doing ill.

As boats that row in Venice
Just so the life of men is:
Our course goes crooked o'er the tide,
With but a broken oar to guide.

Thy heart of oak then cherish,
Or sure thy soul will perish—
The soul is but a boat that goes
Whatever way the heart hath chose.

ALONG THE LINE

WHAT say? A song or a story? Draw up a box 'r a chair,
All them that is wantin' to listen;—but boys, I 'm a-tellin' you fair.
See this? It 'll go for the feller what takes a notion to laugh,
And him or me will be t' our folks a man or a foretograph!

You did n't know Jim—of course not—I 'm tellin' you now of him:
A fearful chap on his muscle, a wild old boy, was Jim;
But, boys, now don't you forgit it, he was as good and square
As any man that the country held—and plenty o' men was there.

ALONG THE LINE

Jim was a lightnin'-jerker—of course you know 't I mean:
He sot at his little table and rattled the Morse machine.
And *did n't* it rattle! I bet you! He 'd studied it down so fine,
There was n't a one that could "send" with him, not all along the line.

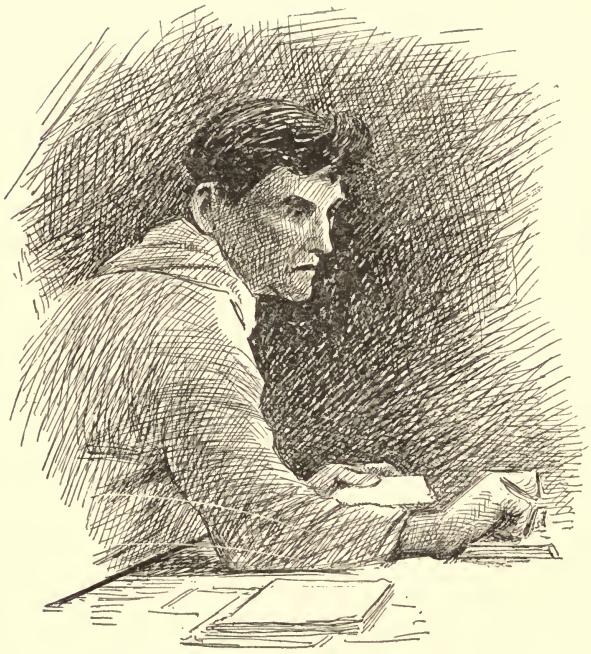
One time Jim sat in the office, a-smokin' and gazin' out,
When in come a feller was lookin' skeered—and nuff to be skeered about!
He told his news in a minute, and, man as he was, got cry'n';
And "*Yaller fever is broken out!*" went clickin' along the line.

I think that line was connected with every soul in the land,

From what was sent t' us Howards—I 'm one,
d 'ye understand?
Of all the parts o' the Union, no tell'n' which
helped us most;
And we was a-workin', we was, sir! And Jim
he kep' to his post.

All day long he was settin' pushin' away at the
key,
Or takin' off from the sounder, just as the case
might be;
And most of the night a-nursin'. And what was
bracin' his heart
Was knowin' his only sister 'n' him was seventy
miles apart.

The air got full o' the fever; grass growed up in
the street;
Travel the town all over, and never a man you 'd
meet,



"There come a break, and his office call"

'Cept, maybe, some feller a-runnin', who 'd say,
as he passed you by:
"I 'm tryin' to find the doctor," or "Billy is bound
to die."

When folks went under—they might be the very
best in the land—
We throwed 'em into a white-pine box, and drayed
'em out off-hand,
To wait their turn to be planted, without a word
or a prayer;
There wa' n't no chance and there wa' n't no time
for prayin' or preachin' there.

Well, Jim, he minded his duty, and stuck to the
work—oh, yes—
But, boys, one Saturday night, when he was busy
sendin' the press,
There come a break, and his office call, and soon
as he 'd time to sign,

"*Your sister's took the fever and died*" come
flashin' along the line.

Throw up the winder and let in air! How can I
breathe or speak
With—Jim? Oh, certainly; news like that was
bound for to make him weak;
But Jim sot straight at the table—he wa' n't the
man to shirk!
And, calmer and cooler than I am now, he finished
the company's work.

But then he dropped; and in four days more all
that was left of him
Was the wasted body that once had held the
noblest soul—poor Jim!
O boys! that brother and sister was *brother and*
sister o' mine!
I wonder if ever we 'll meet ag'in, somewheres
along the line.

HER CONQUEST

MUSTER thy wit, and talk of whatsoever
Light, mirth-provoking matter thou canst find:
I laugh, and own that thou, with small endeavor,
Hast won my mind.

Be silent if thou wilt; thine eyes expressing
Thy thoughts and feelings, lift them up to mine:
Then quickly thou shalt hear me, love, confessing
My heart is thine.

And let that brilliant glance become but tender—
Return me heart for heart—then take the whole
Of all that yet is left me to surrender:
Thou hast my soul.

Now, when the three are fast in thy possession,
And thou hast paid me back their worth, and more,
I 'll tell thee—all whereof I 've made thee cession
Was thine before.

NELLY

NOT long ago—perhaps—not long—
My soul heard no discordant tone,
For love and youth's sweet matin song
It hearkened to, and that alone;

But now the song is hushed,—it hears
Strange music, in a harsher key,
For every sound a dirge appears
Since Nelly died, who lived for me.

The summer of my life is past;
Eternal winter reigns instead;
For how, for me, could summer last,
When she, my only rose, is dead?

Sweet Nelly! would thou couldst be yet,
As once, my day, my only light!

But thou art gone—the sun has set—
And every day, to me, is night.

Yet, be the darkness e'er so deep,
Let no more suns arise for me:
For night can soothe my heart to sleep,
And, Nelly, then I 'll dream of thee!

COSMOS

WHAT to me are all your treasures?
Have I need of purchased pleasures,
Crœsus, such as thine?
Come, I 'll have thee make confession
Thou hast naught in thy possession,
And the world is mine.

I have all that thou hadst never;
Though I 'm old, I 'm young forever,
And happy I, at ease;
All I wish I can create it;
Wing my soul, and elevate it
Where and when I please.

Of my secret make but trial:
Seest thou this little vial?

COSMOS

Dost thou not, then, think
Magic power to it pertaining,
All the world itself containing,
Though it holds but—*ink?*

AN EXCHANGE

DEATH seizeth not the soul;
When life is past control—
No power left to hold it,
When we have lost or sold it—
Why care we for the loss of lives
Of suffering and sinning,
Well knowing that, for what survives,
A life is just beginning?

So, when our day arrives,
Why cling we to our lives?
Though they be clean and fair,
Or stained with sin and care,
The bargain cannot be adverse;
An old life for a new one;
Death cannot make a false soul worse,
Or ever change a true one.

THE CEMETERY

I STAND within this solemn place
And think of days gone by;
I think of many an old-time face;
Here 's where those faces lie.

I think of when, what time God please,
The hour shall come to me,
That, covered by the clay, like these,
My face shall masked be.

No marble monument will rise
Above that grave of mine;
No loving friends will wipe their eyes
When life I shall resign.

But when I leave my life—have left

THE CEMETERY

My every present care—
I 'll find a home of care bereft;
My friends are living there!

GOING

DRAW de curtain wider—wider—let me
see de sun;
I 'll be trab'lin' higher 'n it is, 'fore de day is done.
Prop a cheer ag'in de door, an' le me heah de
breeze,
Soundin' like a runnin' ribber, 'mong de china-
trees.

Sing de "Rock of Ages," Phillis— sing it soft an'
low;
Dat 's de tune I wants to heah ag'in afore I go.
Don't you choke an' sob, ol' 'ooman—sing it
brave an' bol':
Ah, dat music!—seems to me it 's singin' in my
soul!

Listen!—don't you hear de dog? I knows what
makes him howl.

GOING

Las' night, up on top de house, dere sot a whoopin' owl;
Den dat whip-poor-will, you knows you'se'f you heerd it cry—
All dem things has knowledge ob a pusson gwine to die.

I 's a-gwine to glory, Phillis, 'way up in de sky,
Whar de houses is ob gol'—an' you 'll come by an' by!
I ain't gwine to settle down yit; dey will le' me wait
Tell you comes to jine me troo de nebber-shettin' gate.

Take me easy as you kin, an' lif' me up in bed;
Fotch an extry pillow heah, to put beneef my head;
Dar—I 's ready, now, to hab de paf to Hebben showed—
Dem 'ar guidin' angels mus' be stoppin' on de road!

GOING

Phillis, do you reckon dat a harp is hard to play?
'Spose I 'll l'arn to pick it, ef I practise eb'ry day?
Hark!—de angels is a-comin'—heah 'em fly, *ker-swush!*
Dere mus' be a mons'ous covey, comin' wid a rush!

Heah 'em flyin' down de chimbly! No dat *ain't* de win'—
You kain't heah 'em, 'kase yoah ears is stoppered up wid sin.
Glory! Glory! Glory! I 's a-gwine—yes, I 's a-gwine!
I 's de one dat 's taken, you 's de oder lef' behin'!

Angels is a stan'in' 'roun' me, hol'in' out dey han's!
Now I sees de ribber Jordan, running in de san's.
Don't you see dat angel, p'intin' at it wid his sword?
Hush!—don't 'sturb me talkin'—I 's a lookin' fer de ford!

DAT PETER

I'S been a-watchin' people an' deir doings all
my life,
An' sometimes I obsarves to Sophonisby—dat 's
my wife—
Dat nuffin' seldom happens what I does n't 'spect
to see:
But Peter,
Dat Peter!
He gits away wid me.

You see he 's been to Oakland, an' his larnin' is
profound;
I heered him sayin' yes'day dat de yearth kep'
turnin' round!
Dat 'pears to me ridiculous—but I nebber wuz
to school—

DAT PETER

And Peter,
Dat Peter!
He 'lows dat I 's a fool.

Well, mebbe so; I mout be, but I does n't think it 's true;
I ain't so wise as Peter, but I knows a thing or two:
Ef I kain't run as fast as some, I manages to crawl—
But Peter,
Dat Peter!
He thinks he knows it all.

He wears a suit ob store-clo'es, an' a fine fibe dollar hat!
Who eber heered de like afore ob sich gwine on as dat?
He iles his har, he do; an' goes a-sparkin' eb'ry night;
Why Peter,

DAT PETER

Dat Peter!
I guess he thinks he 's white.

I really think ef Peter would rent a leetle patch
ob land,
An' settle down to crappin', dat he 'd hold a better
hand;
De debbil 's gwine to set him back afore his game
is done;
But Peter,
Dat Peter!
He say he 's twenty-one.

Well, let de nigger slide—I could say suffin' ef
I mout,
But I has oder matters to be projeckin' about.
I 's jubious how he 'll come out—hab to wait
a while an' see.
But Peter,
Dat Peter!
He 's most too much for me.

SUMMER IDYLLERS

'TWAS in the heart of Dixie's Land—
(Not where the lime and orange grow,
Not where the palm-tree waves—ah, no;
But where the soil is reddish sand,
And pines, as thick as they can stand,
On every side are seen:
That 's the kind of place I mean)—
Upon a certain afternoon
In June,
Beneath the shed before the door
Of Thomas Carey's cross-roads store,
Sat whittling there some six or more.

The sun appeared a brazen shield,
Or some great pumpkn in a field;
All moving things their course pursued

SUMMER IDYLLERS

With languid Summer lassitude—
The very breezes felt it so
They scarcely mustered strength to blow.
Upon such days, it seems,
Our thoughts did dwell on streams:
And by a natural sequence, then,
—(I here inform the would-be joker
No reference is meant to Poker)—
Comes *fishing* to the minds of men.

William Smith observed that he
Had lately been, with two or three,
A-fishing—and that "he would be
Kersmashed if he—did—*ever* see
The like of peearch and cat—
Some of 'em 'z 'long as *that*:"
And "hoped he might" (an awful wish,)
"Onless they caught six thousand fish!"

There came a round of deep applause,
And then there fell a solemn pause:

For treats were due, by cross-road laws.
None could gainsay it,
But—who was to pay it?
No one stirred, no one invited.

Jackson Flint became excited,
Returning William Smith's defiant glance,
Said he: "That 'minds me of a sarcumstance
I b'lieve I never told you on afore.
It happen—let me see—in 'fifty-four.
I lived down on Big Sandy, then,
And, gentlemen,
The fish they was so awful thick
In that 'ar crick,
That people heered 'em *breathin'*, twenty-six mile off.
—Jack Harris, take some sugar, ef you 're troubled with a cough.—
As I was sayin',
Them fish a-playin',
Made sech a noise, they had me prayin'

"Some of 'em 'z 'long as *that*"

The whole night long. I could n't get a nap
Not nohow,
For the row—
They jest kep' up one everlastin' slap.
One big one got to makin' sech a fuss,
A-jumpin' and a-splashin', wuss and wuss,
And kep' on that-a-way
Every night and every day,
That bye-and-bye
I thinks, says I,
It 's time this here was done with, master cat,
And I am goin' to hev you out of that.
And so I sot a line for him,
And tied it to a swingin' limb.
I caught him. Oh yes.
How big? Well—guess.
His size I 'm kinder bashful for to state,
For fear you 'll think thet I exaggerate.
I kain't say
What he might weigh—
I was n't never thinkin' 'bout his weight—

But, boys, I used that fish's *ribs* for *rails*,
And shingled four log cabins with his *scales*."

Then William Smith breathed forth a sigh,
And passed his sleeve across his eye,
And whistled soft—then called aloud:
"Fetch out the cider for the crowd."

THE KINGDOM GATE

To H. L. F.

NEBBAH knocked on de Kingdom Gate befoah,
Yet dey comes for to let me in—
Come, frow yo' traps on de gall'ry floah,
Ef dey does n't hold no sin!
It ain't bery fur to de Kingdom Gate,
An' de doah, it 's right inside;
But e'zamine yo' baggidge—for dey 'll make you wait,
Ef it 's sin what you 's try'n fur to hide!

You kain't smuggle nuffin' froo de Kingdom Gate
What ain't got de right to go;
You kin get up arly, you kin get up late,
But you 'll nebbah do dat, I know!

THE KINGDOM GATE

De greenhohn angels is de be'y las' kind
What 's detailed dar fo' de gyard—
O bruddah sinnahs, what 's a-stringin' 'long be-
hind
You gwine to git knocked mighty hard!

But n'm mind de trouble
In de Chrismus good ol' way!
An' da 's what we 's sartinly workin' fer to do—
Workin' by de job an' de day.
Halleluyah! nuffin' but de solid gol'
In de gate, and dey ain't no brass.
De lambs inside does n't cumber up de place—
Sinnahs! when you comin' fur to pass?

THE MOCKINGBIRD

NOW, is n't dat mockin'-bird cunnin'?
Jes' listen! He 's workin' dat th'oat
Like he wuz some canderdate runnin'
For sheriff, or clark ob de coaht!
Look at him, a-settin' dar swingin'
'Way out on de eend ob de limb—
Dat 's glorified music he 's singin':
Some angel is taught it to him.

"Dat 's glorified music he 's singin' "

SHIPS FROM THE SEA

To "Ishmael"

WITH a trembling hand she launched them
On the ever-shifting tide,
And she stood on the beach and watched them
Far out on the ocean glide,
Till their shadowy shrouds had mingled
With the mists they sailed to meet,
And the rainbow-tinted masses
Received her fairy-fleet.

Her dearest hopes were their cargo,
Her fancy furnished the chart,
And to guide them upon the voyage
The compass was her heart.
With their gossamer pennants flying
And their silken sails outspread,

SHIPS FROM THE SEA

O'er a strange, mysterious ocean
The goblin vessels sped.

When the years had passed, she waited
On the golden sands of the beach
That her long expected flotilla
Was never destined to reach;
And she asked of the murmuring sea-breeze,
And again of the waves around,
The question often repeated,
"Are my vessels homeward bound?"

And there came to her never an answer,
She asked in vain of the waves—
And the sighing breezes swept past her
And never an answer gave;
But she patiently watched and waited
For the coming home of her ships,
Till the bloom of her beauty had faded,
And the smile had forgotten her lips.

SHIPS FROM THE SEA

At last, when its fetters were broken,
Her spirit fled over the sea,
In search of her long-missing vessels—
Wherever these vessels might be.
In the country of dreams and of spirits,
All wrecked on a treacherous strand,
She found her good ships and their cargo,
Her hopes, buried deep in the sand.

Never we know when we launch them
The way that our vessels will roam,
Nor know we when to expect them,
If ever, returning home.
To some they come preciously laden
From short and from prosperous trips,
But the most of us vainly are waiting
For the coming home of our ships.

UNCLE CALEB'S VIEWS

I AIN'T no hand for readin', so ob co'se, it 's
hardly squar'
When bus'ness comes to writin', for to 'spect me
to be dar—
But I kin tell repo'tahs all de wisdom dat dey
please,
'Kase wisdom don't depend upon yo' knowin'
abycees.

You 're one de gemmen' writin' fo' de independent
press—
It ain't mo' independent dan yo'sef, sah! So I
guess—
And dem ar kind o' papers needs dey items bol'
and free,
An' so I sees de reason why you 's come to talk wid
me.

UNCLE CALEB'S VIEWS

I allus tells my min' stret out, no mattah what I
think,
As nateral as "Thank you, sah," when asked to
take a drink.
So, now, des ax me questions, an' I 'll gib you
solid news
'Bout any kin' ob subject you is pleasin' for to
choose

Dis trade of yours? Well, hit, sah, is a berry
gallus-trade,
Hit 's dis a way an' dat a way, accordin' as you 's
paid.
You has to do yo' bus'ness on the profitable
plan–
Dey ain't no room for conscience in a daily papah
man.

I knows; I swep' an office out for more 'a seben
years,

An' mixed de paste, and sharpened up de aidges of
de shears,
An' all dat time, dem editors, I 'm tellin' you for
shore,
Was nebber men enough to lose two bits upon de
floor.

But you, sah! Laws a mussy, you 's a 'ception
to de rule—
I nebber seed no 'potah yit so little like a fool,
An' if you keeps a marchin' on, who knows but
what yo' course
Mought bring you up to wear a unicorn upon de
force?

Well, mash'r, as you say so, I believe I will take
in
A little ob de 'rig'nal—see here, Johnny, gib me
gin!

Ahoomh! dat 's hot an' hearty! When you wants
to know some mo'
Just come to Uncle Caleb, an' he 'll gib it to you,
sho!

POT-LIQUOR

POT-LICKAH, sah, consound you,
Why don't you smell around you?
Be libely, now—I 'm bound you
Come across 'em—
Dey 's a kin' ob sensuation
In dis niggah's copperation,
Like a in'ard rebbylation
Ob a 'possum.

Come, go ahead, Pot-lickah!
Dis ain't no time to flickah;
So moobe a little quickah
If you please, sah!
Go in dat bresh, an' bring out,
Or dribe de 'possums' king out—
An' don't forgit to sing out

"Go in dat bresh, and dribe de 'possums' king out"

POT-LIQUOR

What you sees, sah.
Kain't be eaten?
By you, you pizen rebel,
For meanness, straight an' lebel,
I 'clar de berry debble
Would be beaten!

It 's gin'ally de custom
To train your dogs an' trust 'em
But sometimes you mus' bust 'em
For dey own good—
An' so wid *people* which has
Misused dey moral riches:
Mus' punish dem: not sich as
Nebber known good.

THE MISSISSIPPI MIRACLE

I 'S let up on preachin'. I 's truly
De Rev'rind Dick Wilkins, D.D.;
I know I heerd Gabr'el a-callin'
An' thought he was callin' on me:
"You Wilkins, go preach me de gospel!"
Dat, sah, was de way dat he went;
But now, sah, I 's mightily jubous
'T was some oder Wilkins he meant.

Yes, sah, dat ar matter you knows of
Has cleaned me plumb out of my grace!
What! ain't nebber heard of it? Nebbah?
Seed nobody in from de place?
Den set down an' listen; an' when, sah,
I 's tol' you de mizable tale,
You 'll 'low dat religion, out ou' way,
Is mighty low down in the scale.

THE MISSISSIPPI MIRACLE

I started to work wid good prospects:
  My field, you mought call it, was good;
I tried fur to keep up de fences,
  An' worked it de best 'at I could;
De site wuz n't much fur to brag on:
  'T wus mos'ly clay gullies an' sand—
But de craps, in de way ob collections,
  Wuz good fur dat 'scription ob land.

Well, sah, we got up a revival,
  To last a consid'able while,
An' 'greed, as we 's gwine fur to hab it,
  'T wuz best fur to hab it in style.
We started her goin' at sun-up,
  An' kep' her a-bilin' till night,
When forty-odd mo'nahs wuz shoutin',
  An' forty more comin' in sight.

Des den it come into my min', sah,
  To gib dem 'ar niggahs a trile;
An' so I riz up, an' I says, sah—

THE MISSISSIPPI MIRACLE

I says with a beautiful smile:
"My frien's, I 'm a-gwine to propose you
A small, onsignificant test,
To proobe—out ob all ob de virtues—
Which ob you has Charity best.

"Now, hush up a minnit! I tell you,
An' den you kin go on an' shout.
De short ob de mattah is: Friday
My barrel ob whiskey gub out;
It happens, too, des at dis moment,
I has n't de money to buy—
An' so I propose to *you*-all
Dat you shill make up de supply.

"To-morrow I 'll hab me a barrel
A-settin' out dar on the bluff;
An' eb'ry good Christian 's expected
To fotch 'long a pint o' good stuff:
So I 'll git my barrel ob whiskey,
An' you 'll get the feeling dat you

Is got CHARITY down till you 're ekal
To gibbin' de debbil his due!"

Nex' mohnin' sah, dar wuz de barrel;
An' eb'ry man fotched up a flask,
An't put de neck down in de bunghole,
An' emptied it into de cask.
I thought 'at I 'd try how it swallowed,
An' held a gourd under the spout,
An' den gib a turn on de fossit—
When nuffin but WATER come out!

"A miracle!" shouted de sistahs.
"A miracle nuffin!" says I;
"I see froo de mattah—it 's easy
"To tell you des how it come by:
"Each man fotched a bottle of water,
"An' thought, when the cask wuz complete,
"By *eb'ry one else bringin' whiskey*,
"Nobody would notice de cheat!"

THE MISSISSIPPI MIRACLE

Dat sort o' broke up the revival—
An' raly I think it wuz time,
Wid all de head brudders convicted
Ob such a contemptible crime!
Dey is n't no good in purfeshins;
Dat 's one think I hope 'at you sees,—
But, sah, it 's so late I mus' leab you
To pick out what moral you please.

Note.—Such an incident as the one above described is said to have actually happened in a country parish of France—wine, of course, having been the subject matter, and no whiskey spoken of. In that case, however, M. le Curé suspected very well what would happen—had made the request as a trap—and had ready a terrible sermon on the premises, which he preached with great effect.—I. R.

THE END

GF117777414A

RETURN TO → CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT
202 Main Library
642-3403

LOAN PERIOD 1	2	3
4	5	6

LIBRARY USE

This book is due before closing time on the last date stamped below

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

LIBRARY USE JAN 26 '80

REC. CIR. JAN 2 6 1980

FEB 20 1999

Mar 16'00

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
FORM NO. DD6A, 20m, 11/78 BERKELEY, CA 94720

U. C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES
C061412544

M170823

953
R964
1917

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY